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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

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Fred firing Rob's Gun.

See page 177

JESSIE SAYS SO.

A Story for Girls.

THREE ILLUSTRATIONS.

New York :
PUBLISHED BY CARLTON & PORTER,
SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION, 200 MULBERRY-STREET.

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ASTOR LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

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JESSIE SAYS SO.

CHAPTER I.

THE SECRET.

“JESSIE ROSS! Jessie Ross! come here a moment,” called Helen Norton, putting her head over the shoulders of a group of little girls who had gathered round Jessie to hear one of her stories.

“Come quick! I’ve something splendid I want to tell you—”

“Helen Norton, you always spoil all our fun,” said Nancy Remson fretfully. “I wish you would go about

your own business and let ours alone. Nobody asked you to come."

"Nobody asked you to come," mimicked Helen, "nor you either, cross patch; so you may speak when you are spoken to, and hold your tongue when you are bidden to. I don't want you. I only asked for Jessie Ross. Come, Jessie, make haste; there isn't a single minute to be lost."

Then Helen put her long black arm over the circle and drew Jessie out.

Jessie had become, since her visit to Helen on the day of Helen's disobedience, very much afraid of her. She always avoided her, never joining a play if she found Helen was engaged in it, and taking pains always to go to and from school in company with some one else.

Helen did not love Jessie, but she could not help seeing that she avoided her, and this made her determine that, come what might, Jessie should like her just as well as she did all the other girls.

Among the children generally Jessie, as she grew older, was a great favorite. No one else could think of half so many plays, or make what they had so pleasant. It did not seem much to matter what it was, if it was only "Button! Button!" Jessie put life and fun even into the small white button, and made it say a great many queer things, as it went hiding around from one plump hand to another.

And if it was either warm, or cold, or the children did not feel like active plays, there was Jessie's fund of

stories, always fresh and new, and, what would have astonished her little hearers if they had stopped to think of it, never giving out.

Jessie was so good-natured about telling them, too, that one might have thought she enjoyed them almost as much as her audience.

Jessie was just in the most interesting of one of her scenes when Helen called her, and it is very probable, if she had been less frightened, she would have made some objection to going; but as it was she stopped abruptly, and taking hold very reluctantly of Helen's outstretched hand, went with her to the gray rock, hidden behind which the children told most of their "secrets."

It was a queer old rock, and looked pretty much like whatever the

child who looked at it chose to make it.

Sometimes it was like the hull of a man-of-war, perhaps like the picture of the frigate Constitution which they had in their geography. To others it looked like a church, with a belfry and a flat roof; and to some it was precisely like one of the icebergs which, as a traveling agent had brought about a panorama of Dr. Kane's arctic voyages, they thought he must have seen at the North pole.

For this summer this was the prevailing fancy of the school children; so now Helen said:

"Come to the iceberg. We can talk there without any one hearing a word we say, and it's a great secret. I wouldn't have any body else hear me for the world."

Jessie hung back a little, (that was out of sight of the rest of the children,) and she did not quite like to venture; but Helen pulled her along, and stumbling over the baby houses which covered every available ledge of the rock, they came to the hiding place and sat down.

Helen got up twice and peeped out to see if any one had followed her and was listening, before she began. She then put her arm affectionately around Jessie, and would have drawn her close to her; but Jessie sat very stiffly by herself, not so much as returning Helen's caresses by the least pressure. Helen noticed this, for she said:

"Let you and I be good friends, just as if we were real sisters; you know I haven't a sister of my own, Jessie."

Jessie's muscles softened a little, but she did not move any nearer; so Helen herself came as close as she could to Jessie, and began to whisper in her ear:

"Suppose we give a surprise party to Macy Barton."

"A surprise party?" said Jessie, not a little surprised herself.

"Yes, a real one; just such a one as they gave Mr. Marsh, our minister, you know."

"But they were grown up people," said Jessie.

"Well, what of that. The minister and his wife are grown up people too," answered Helen. "It would be droll enough if old Deacon Johnson, and Judge Carr, and Mrs. Leonard, and Mrs. Donald, and all those should give a surprise party to

a child like Macy Barton; but I don't see as that is any reason why we children can't go, and take things to eat just as they did, and have a grand time."

"But Macy Barton is all alone. George is gone through the day you know."

"So much the more reason why we should go and make her happy," said Helen decidedly. "My mother says she thinks it's very wrong to allow the child to live there so much alone; that it is making her look as old as the hills, and she is only eleven now."

"Old as the hills!" ejaculated Jessie in much alarm. "Why, I think she is the prettiest girl in Sherburne this very minute, and she don't look half so old as you do, Helen Norton."

"I dare say you think so," said Helen, coloring. "You always take Macy's part against everybody, and I should think you might like to give her a surprise party if you are as fond of her as you pretend. But Bessie Hart will, and you may just go back and finish your old story. I am sure, if I was Macy, I should like a friend that was a friend, not a sham!"

"I am not a *sham*, you know that as well as I do," said Jessie; "and you haven't given me a chance to say whether I like the party or not; you always get vexed so soon."

"Then you will have the party," and Helen's arm crept around Jessie's neck again.

"I will ask my mother about it."

"You can't do that;" and Helen's

voice was very triumphant. "It's a secret, you know, and you promised not to tell."

"No, I didn't," said Jessie.

"Yes, you did!" and Helen's foot came down very imperatively on the ground.

Jessie was silent, and after waiting in vain for another denial, Helen said:

"If you tell your mother, I will never tell you another thing as long as you live."

"But how do you expect to get the cake and pies, and such things as they had at Mr. Marsh's, unless we tell our mothers?"

"I don't know," said Helen, hesitating. "We can't, can we?"

"And how are we going to have a party unless all the girls know it?"

"And the boys too," chimed in Helen.

"I don't know about the boys; my mother don't like to have me go to real parties like that."

"I won't go a step unless they do come;" and Helen drew her arm away peevishly.

"I should like of all things to have Fred there, he is always so happy; and as there is George, perhaps mother wouldn't object for once," said Jessie doubtfully.

"Your mother aint half as good as mine, Jessie Ross; my mother never says no, she always lets me do just as I wan't to."

Jessie opened her eyes very wide at the idea of her mother's not being as good as Mrs. Norton, but she wisely said nothing.

"My mother," continued Helen, "will make me lots of pies and cake, and anything else I want if I only ask her."

"Then you must tell her what you want them for."

"Yes," said Helen hesitatingly, "I suppose she would ask; but if I should tell her it wasn't any of her business, she would let me alone straight off."

"None of her business!" repeated Jessie.

"Why, yes; she isn't going to the party, is she? I should just like to know?"

"I never heard any body say such wicked things as you do, Helen Norton. Come, let us go back, recess is almost over."

"Then you may tell your mother, but you must promise me 'honor

bright' that you won't tell anybody else.' ”

“ I may tell my sister Susan.”

“ Susan ! well I don't care if you do, for she is old enough to be your mother, and she won't want to go, that is very certain.”

“ But it would be very nice if she would go,” said Jessie, her face kindling with pleasure at the thought. “ She would make everything go just right. She always does at home, mother says.”

“ Well, you will just please to remember, Jessie Ross, that it is my secret, and not yours, and if you tell anybody you will break your promise and tell a falsehood.”

“ You said I might tell my mother.”

“ Your mother ! O yes, but she

isn't one of the girls any more than my mother is."

The bell for the closing of recess now rang, and the two children hurried from their hiding-place back into the school-room. Macy Barton was waiting for Jessie, and as they passed her Helen gave a significant toss of the head, and looked as if it was just as much as she could do to keep from telling her that very minute.

Long before morning hours were over, Helen had whispered or written on her slate, under great big capitals that spelt the word *secret*, all about the surprise party to half the girls in school. Miss Goddard, the teacher, saw there was something going on which took their attention from their lessons, but wisely decided to take no notice of it until it had

shown itself in imperfect recitations. And true enough, in all the classes called out not more than half, and those the ones with whom Helen had not communicated, knew anything about the lesson. Very sad work they made of it, and Miss Goddard when she sent them to their seats to make it perfect, told them to give their attention undividedly during the remainder of the school hours to their books.

Miss Goddard was just one of those teachers whom all the children love, because they can't help it. She always had such a still, well-behaved school, and one where the lessons were well committed.

When she first came to Sherburne it was noted for disorderly schools, so she said "she would take only girls;"

and after one single week the very naughtiest ones, those who had given so much trouble that they had been turned away from school several times, became quiet and so well-behaved that Miss Goddard really began to love them, and of course they loved her, and that was the secret of their trying to be better children.

She had had more trouble with Helen Norton than with any of the rest, for Helen was, I am very sorry to say it, deceitful and cunning.

She tried always to seem fair and smooth before Miss Goddard; but if anything went wrong, and was concealed, Helen was sure to be at the bottom of it.

Now to-day, Miss Goddard never doubted for a moment who it was that had been doing the mischief

round among the girls ; her only question was, what would be the surest and quietest way of putting a stop to it in study hours.

Notwithstanding the failures in the recitations, it was still very evident that the children's attention was not upon their books ; and trusting to the excitement, coming from whatever cause it might, expending itself before afternoon, Miss Goddard dismissed the school a few minutes before the usual time, without taking any further notice of the commotion.

O what a crowding together and whispering there was then. Those of the girls who knew the secret were anxious to know all its details ; and those who knew nothing about it were showing off their different traits of disposition in a very open manner.

Matilda Jenkins grew angry, and catching her bonnet, said :

“She was sure she did not want to know such a foolish secret as that. Any one might know, if it came from Helen Norton, it was not worth hearing.”

Julia Brace began to cry, and said, whimpering :

“She didn’t care, she thought she had as good a right to know as anybody else, and she would go right home and tell her mother, she knew she would.”

Kate Darling “had a secret that was a great deal better than Helen Norton’s,” so she began to gather the neglected ones around herself, and soon formed a pretty strong party. Her secret, however, did not seem to be of much value, for the children said :

“How silly! Poh! I could tell a better one myself!” and a variety of such complimentary remarks.

Helen Norton looked at the opposing party with much disdain, and beckoned away one after another until there were only three girls in school who were not partakers of the secret, Julia Brace, Matilda Jenkins, and Macy Barton.

This was an unusual slight to Macy, for she was next, or perhaps before Jessie Ross, the favorite in the school. Of course all the girls but these three understood why Macy could not be told, but as they did not, Julia and Matilda walked home with Macy, and said a great many unkind and cross things about Helen Norton, which it pained Macy very much to

hear, and made her more unhappy than it had not to hear the secret.

Before school in the afternoon Matilda and Julia had managed to learn what it was from some of the younger children, out of whom they had coaxed it by promise of rewards; and though they had bound themselves "not to tell" that they had been told, yet they could not help showing full plainly to the girls that they did really know.

"Who told you?" was the first question they had to answer; and they both said, for they had agreed together what they should do:

"Find out by your larning."

During the first hour of the afternoon session there was more disobedience to Miss Goddard than there

had been for three whole months before.

Whispering, little notes passing around under the desks, deaf and dumb words, made while the fingers were hidden from the teacher in some study-book, so sometimes whole rows of bright eyes were fixed upon the fingers instead of their own books.

Miss Goddard saw something decided must be done, so watching her opportunity, she found Lucy Ray drawing the attention of half the school to something she had printed on her slate.

“Lucy! let me see your slate!” she said suddenly; but in an instant the child’s hand was in her mouth, and then the whole was rubbed out.

“Come here!” said Miss Goddard.

The child rose slowly leaving her slate, and on it two great round tears, and walked to the desk.

“Go back for your slate!”

“There aint nothing on it,” said Lucy, indistinctly.

“No, I saw you rub it out, but you will put it back for me, I know.”

Miss Goddard said this so kindly that Lucy’s fears began to subside and she brought her slate, brushing off the tears as she came.

“Here is my pretty new slate pencil,” said the teacher, “you may write with that. See! it almost makes a mark of itself;” and she put it into the trembling little hand; then laid her own for an instant on it with a gentle loving touch.

No other authority could have been so great; the fingers under hers

began to move, and pretty soon there was spelt out in large letters the words "*sponge cake*."

Miss Goddard smiled as she saw it. She never thought of doubting that it was the very one which the child had erased, she *knew* it was, so she said :

"Thank you ; now you will go to your seat and be a quiet little girl, and get your lesson for the rest of the afternoon, will you not ?

"Yes, ma'am," said Lucy gratefully.

All eyes in school were turned with looks of dread upon Macy Barton, until the poor child became quite pale with agitation. "What could it mean ? Why did they thus single her out ? What had she done or said ? Had she dressed herself in

any peculiar way? What was it?"

Miss Goddard was quite as much puzzled as Macy, but she resolved to resume the school routine, and persevere in going on as usual if she could.

Every thing was soon quiet and orderly. Her gentleness with frightened Lucy had done more toward immediately restoring her authority than any severe punishment would, and she was pleased to find that things went on as usual to the end of the school.

Hurrying a little, she joined the groups of children who she saw were lingering around the door, hoping they would take her into their confidence, and so save her all future trouble.

"Can't you tell me too?" she said, holding out her hand to Helen Norton, whom she immediately singled out as the leader in the affair.

Helen began to laugh, and looked very silly; but the other children called out:

"O yes! do! do! It will be so nice to have Miss Goddard know. Please do, Helen! She won't tell; will you, Miss Goddard?"

"I never make such promises," said the teacher. "If Helen tells me, she must trust me to tell or not as I think proper."

"She made us all promise on our word and honor, certain true, black and blue, and everything else she could think of."

Miss Goddard smiled and said: "Then, if you have promised you

will be very careful, I hope, every one of you, and keep it. Remember, it is telling a falsehood to make a promise and then break it. That old saying, 'A bad promise is better broken than kept,' is good only when you have promised to do a wrong act, and such promises should never be made. But the child that excuses itself in this way for a breach of promise in which no wrong is involved, will soon learn to be untrustworthy in many things. But now for the secret?"

"If you tell Macy Barton you'll spoil all the fun," said one of the girls.

"Macy Barton and sponge cake," said Miss Goddard, putting the two things together. "I guess—a surprise party"

"Some one told you," said half a dozen voices together; "Jessie Ross did, she always tell you every thing."

"Neither Jessie nor any one else has told me a word," said Miss Goddard; "I only, as I told you, *guessed*."

"Jessie Ross promised not to tell," said several, "and *she* never breaks a promise."

"Never, never," said quite a chorus, and Miss Goddard added:

"How very pleasant that is, to be a child who never breaks her word; why, she is worth her weight in gold."

"So she is; we all tell her all our secrets, and she is as tight as—as—why—" said the child who was speaking, blushing, "she is as tight as a drawer all locked up."

Jessie fortunately had walked away with Macy Barton. She had seen quickly how troubled Macy was, and it had given her more pain than the party did pleasure, particularly as she was old enough to ask how all could be carried out, and Macy's feelings not hurt every day by the avoidance of her while they were making their plans.

Miss Goddard had guessed so much that Helen Norton was very ready to tell the rest, and all the children were gratified to hear the teacher say :

"That if the parents approved, she thought it might be managed so to be pleasant for Macy and for them all; but it would be better if they would keep it out of their heads as much as they could in school hours ;

and she would promise them, if they gave her no trouble in their recitations, to make something very pretty for them when the time should come."

She told them, as it was Thursday now, they had better make arrangements for having it on the next Saturday, and particularly cautioned them not to talk about it when Macy was around, as it was scarcely worth while to make her unhappy now for the sake of being happy by and by.

The surprise party met with general favor both at home and at school. The elderly people had enjoyed the minister's gathering so much that they were quite willing to assist their children in receiving a similar pleasure; and though every thing could not be kept going perfectly smooth, and there were many jars

and discords, yet, taken as a whole, there were not more than might have been expected. To crown the wishes of all, Saturday dawned as fine a day for the occasion as could have been desired.

Macy Barton had learned quickly that, for some mysterious reason, whatever was going on that gave the others pleasure was denied to her. She wondered much over it, and at last came to the conclusion, a very unjust one indeed, that she was shut out because she was so poor and friendless. This was not like Macy; but she had no one, not even Jessie Ross now, to tell how much she was troubled, because Jessie knew the secret, and kept it from her as well as the others.

Macy was very glad when Satur-

day came, so that she need not go to school. She hoped before Monday the girls would get something new to talk about, and so forget this.

All Saturday morning the village was alive with Miss Goddard's scholars. They were running from one house to another, and such an excited, happy set of children surely Sherburne had never seen before.

Fortunately the mill dam was removed from all this bustle, or Macy's heart would have ached more than ever over so much going on of which she knew nothing.

Mrs. Ross had entered quite warmly into this plan, much more so than she had into that of the minister's party; for she thought, as a general thing, a surprise party is an unwarrantable intrusion, and that if a com-

pliment is intended to be paid, there are a thousand pleasanter and more delicate ways. But with a child like Macy, and not to go into the house, but to have the picnic in the woods close by, she thought it would be a source of simple pleasure to them all.

Boys were not to go; such was the first decision. But the girls began to find, before the preparations were made, that one or two would be a great help; so after much consultation among the committee, Helen Norton, Jessie Ross, and Laura Strong, they decided to ask four boys not only to assist them, but to be company to George Barton when he should come from work.

These boys were to be, Fred Ross, of course no children in Sherburne

could ever do anything without him ; Arthur Strong, a brave, handsome boy, and almost as good-natured as Fred ; Thomas Selwin, Widow Selwin's only child, (and the widow was rich, and would do more toward the collation than any one else ;) and Edwin Bass. Now Edwin was small and sickly. He could not assist, and never made any one happier by being with them ; but he had just lost his mother, and the children, when they saw how heart-broken the poor boy seemed at her funeral, determined to do all they could to make him happy. Jessie did not forget him now, and so when the clock struck twelve all was complete for the party.

CHAPTER II.

THE SURPRISE PARTY.

FRIDAY night, just after dark, Macy Barton was sitting alone by the front steps, wondering over many things which had happened during the past week, and now and then wiping away a tear at the remembrance of some whisper or laugh when she had approached a group of school-girls. She had listened so long for George's footsteps through the woods, that she became, as she very often did, afraid of the stillness and deep silence which, with the exception of the falling water, was all around her.

Then Macy began to think, too, of

her dead mother, and to wonder why God spared both parents to so many other children and took away hers, not even leaving her her poor, sick old grandfather.

Macy's fears added very much to her present sense of trouble, and from a single tear coming now and then to her eyes, and being wiped quickly away, Macy began to indulge in a hard fit of crying, from which however she was suddenly stopped by footsteps which she thought must be George's. Running to the river, she endeavored to wipe away all traces of tears, and had just succeeded when Sammy Carr, the baker's son, came by, and told her George had been hired to go on an errand for a gentleman to the next town, and had sent him to say she must not wait tea, or

sit up for him, as he should not be at home until late.

Now Macy was one of those children who are much more apt to give up to and be afraid of an imaginary danger than of a real one, and no sooner had Sammy disappeared up the road, and the old solitude fallen around her, than, instead of imagining she heard and saw frightful things, she seated herself on a large stone, close down by the spot where she had thrown in a stick and helped to save Fred Ross's life, and began to think of Jessie and of him, and how much she loved them both. Pleasant thoughts these were, that God sent to cheer the little orphan; and he sent, too, a soft, beautiful sunset, which glinted through the green leaves, and fell like drops of gold on

the leaping falls. Then Macy saw a rainbow, and though there came no thought formed into words in her mind, as she watched it arching over the bright spray, still, it did utter to her just the very language God intended it to speak when he made it, for it said to her :

“ Macy Barton, ‘ Fear ye not, therefore ; ye are of much more value than many sparrows, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father.’ ”

So Macy knew that her heavenly Father was all about her ; and leaning her chin upon her hands, while she sat watching the sky, and the clouds, and the river, unconsciously she began to sing these words :

“ O the sunny summer time !
O the leafy summer time !

Merry is the bird's life
When the year is in its prime !
Birds are by the waterfalls
Dashing in the rainbow spray ;
Everywhere, everywhere,
Light and lovely there are they.
Birds are in the forest old,
Building in each hoary tree ;
Birds are on the green hill,
Birds are by the sea.

“ On the moor and in the fen,
'Mong the whortleberries green,
In the yellow furze bush
There the joyous bird is seen ;
In the heather on the hill,
All among the mountain thyme,
By the little brook's side
Where the sparkling waters chime.
In the crag and on the peak,
Splintered, savage, wild and bare,
There the bird, with wild wing,
Wheeeth through the air.”

Macy had a very sweet voice and a great natural love for music, so she made the tune suit to the words as

fitly as if she had been an experienced composer; and she became so interested in watching for the birds and in her melody, that she did not hear footsteps in the same direction from which Sammy Carr came. She was therefore very much startled when a voice said close to her:

“Well, Macy Barton, if that aint the very prettiest song I ever heard in my life; who taught it to you? I never even heard the words before.”

“O I have sung them ever so many times,” said Macy, recognizing Helen Norton. “My mother taught them to me when I was a very little girl.”

“I suppose you feel like a great one now,” said Helen, seating herself familiarly by Macy on the large

stone. "But my mother says it's awful wicked for the folks to let you live here all alone so; the bears might come out of the woods and eat you for all that they would know up in the village."

"There never are bears here," said Macy, glancing timidly at the twilight gathering over the woods. "George says one has not been killed here these fifty years."

"Well, so much more danger then," persisted Helen, "for if they have not been killed they must be alive now."

"I am not afraid of them," said Macy with sudden resolution. "God is here in these woods, and he tells me to 'fear not;' for if he takes care of all the little sparrows that build their nests among the brown limbs,

and he does, you know, Helen ! he will also take care of me, for I am of more value."

"How do you know he says so?" asked Helen anxiously, "I don't believe he does."

"The Bible says so, and that is God's word," answered Macy, folding her hands together as if she were praying.

"I never read it in the Bible."

"That is because you don't go to Sabbath-school ; if you did you would learn a great many things you don't know anything about now. You should hear," continued Macy, growing very much interested in the subject, "you should hear Jessie Ross say her lessons, particularly if they are about Bible stories. You don't know how we all, even Miss Newton,

our teacher, listen. It seems as if they were a great deal more interesting than any other she ever tells."

"Poh! I don't believe it," said Helen contemptuously. "I had rather hear about Goody Two Shoes, or little Cinderella and the Glass Slipper, or Jack, the Giant Killer. I am tired to death of old Moses and that everlasting cradle that has been hidden no one knows how many thousand years down by that river. I should think, for my part, Pharaoh's daughter would have worn out so many shoes walking, and walking, and walking there, that if her father wasn't a king it would cost a mint of money to buy them."

Helen thought all this was very witty, and laughed so boisterously when she had finished that Macy

moved a little way from her as she said:

"Don't talk so, Helen! I don't think it's right, and I don't believe God will take care of us through these long dark nights if we do such wicked things. Come, shall we go in?"

"I don't know," said Helen, hesitating, and looking up and down the darkening road. "I had just as soon wait until it is pretty dark before I go home, so no one need see me. But mother has forbidden me being out after it's dark, and if she should happen to be at home and know it she would make a great rumpus."

"I would go right home then," said Macy, more conscientiously perhaps than politely. But Helen lin-

gered around the front gate, and finally, without waiting for any further invitation, pushed it open and went into the house.

Macy followed Helen reluctantly. She never had liked her very well, and now there was something particularly displeasing about her; but this Helen did not notice. She had an object to accomplish, and this, as is often the case with children, and grown people too, made her indifferent to every thing else.

As soon as they were within, Helen reopened the door, peeped cautiously up and down the road, then looked out from every window, and finally ended by drawing Macy into a corner of the room, and having a long whispered conversation with her.

What the subject of this conversa-

tion was my readers must discover for themselves as they go on.

One o'clock on Saturday, at the school-house, was to be the meeting time and place for the children and the baskets. Here they were to form all their plans, and to separate in small parties, and start at such different times and ways as would insure their coming about the same minute to the Dam.

Miss Goddard and Susan Ross were there to see that every thing was arranged as it should be, and the boys, with the heaviest articles of food, were to bring up the rear after the girls had arrived.

How to get Macy Barton out of the way while the boys were building the tables was the most disputed point. George would be at work,

and Mr. Swift had promised that he should be sent home at four, on an errand, and then he should open a paper which Mr. Swift was to give him, and which was to contain his contribution to the occasion. This paper was directed to Fred Ross on the outside, but to George on the inner cover. A very nice device the children all thought.

After much debate it was decided that Jessie Ross, as the child Macy would be most pleased to see, should go for her, and should bring her, by a road which the other children were prohibited from walking, to Mrs. Ross. And so, with a heart beating so quickly with happiness that it almost took away her breath, she ran as fast as she could to the Dam.

“Jessie is just the one to send,”

said one of the girls, looking after her. "Nobody ever doubts a word she says, and Macy will come with her right off, without suspecting a thing."

"Splendid! splendid!" said several others. "If we can only get every thing done before she comes home and knows about it, how grand it will be!"

"And Jessie Ross," said another, "never broke a promise in her life. If she says she won't tell, we all know she never does."

"You couldn't get it out of her if you should tease 'till the ducks fly over the river,'" said Lucy Lee. "I have tried many a time to make her tell me a secret, but she never would."

"So have I," "and I," shouted a

full chorus. In short, it was very plain that our little Jessie had the most unlimited confidence of her playmates. "Jessie says so." They seem to need nothing else to make them certain of a thing.

O what a beautiful trait this is in a child. Stop, my reader, just here, and ask yourself about your "says so!" How is it? Does any one ever question it? Does your mother shake her head sometimes and look doubtful, or does your father ask some one else? Your brothers and sisters, are they always sure that it is precisely as you say? Does it end all wonder and discussion when it comes to you, and you say what you know? No child needs any help in answering these questions. If you have never thought of them before,

ask them now, and be sure what you say to yourself shall be as true and faithful as what you say to other people.

When Jessie reached the Dam she was at once struck by a peculiarity in Macy's appearance for which she could not account.

She seemed embarrassed, and the color came and went as if she were frightened, while she started at every sound; and though she seemed to try to keep her eyes straight before her, they would wander in every direction from which came a path from the town.

"What ails you, Macy?" said Jessie, after they had started for Jessie's home. "You act so queer. I never saw you do so—"

"George was away late last night,"

said Macy, evasively, "and somehow I am not as bold as I used to be. I kept thinking I heard and saw things down in the opening of the woods."

"Why didn't you say your hymns?" asked Jessie simply. "I always do, if I am afraid, and you don't know how soon it takes it all away."

"O I repeated so many," said Macy, with a slight shudder, "but I kept listening in between them, just the same."

"Well, but that was last night, and to-day, out here in this beautiful sunlight with me, there is surely nothing to be afraid of," said Jessie cheerily, "and you seem a little scared now."

"Do I?" and Macy tried faintly to return her friend's smile; "how silly

it is in me ; but I shall be all over it by and by."

Then Macy made a great exertion to appear as she always did, only perhaps a little more noisy. This was so unusual that Jessie looked at her from time to time very curiously out of her great gray eyes, and when they reached her mother she was so desirous to tell her how oddly Macy acted, that she left her young friend alone, while she followed her to the room.

"Perhaps some one has told her about the surprise party, Jessie," said her mother, "and if so it will make her feel very much excited, you know."

"I will run and ask her this very minute, mamma," said Jessie.

"Stop, Jessie, what are you going to ask?"

“Why, if she knows about the party.”

“And if she does not, what then?”

“Why—then—then—mamma,” the dilemma beginning slowly to creep into Jessie’s mind, “then she don’t, that’s all.”

“No, that’s not all; you would have told her.”

“So I should; how queer! Well, I must let it all be, and let her do and look just as she pleases, I suppose.”

“That is the wisest way,” answered her mother. “Some of the children may have been foolish enough to have told her.”

“But,” interrupted Jessie, “they all promised not to.”

“I am sorry to say children don’t

always keep their promises, do they?"

"No, mamma," said Jessie soberly, "I am afraid not; but if no one knows she knows, it will not be so bad after all, will it?"

"If you wished it strictly a surprise; I am sorry, Jessie but much more sorry to think there will be a single child there who has valued her promise no more than this shows. Perhaps, however, we are both mistaken, so don't let it spoil your pleasure; and now, Macy must be wondering where you are, and by the time you walk slowly back everything will be ready for you. Good-by, and a very pleasant surprise party to you."

Jessie's face had the cloud all lifted from it when she rejoined her friend,

and they walked slowly back to the Dam.

“Not a person was to be seen as they approached the house. Jessie looked with anxious eyes, but there was the small house standing in its pretty garden as lonely and as quiet as ever. She cast a stolen glance into Macy’s face ; there was a bright color in her cheeks, and an excited look about her blue eyes, quite unusual.

Was she told ? If so, who could have told her ? Jessie was so busy asking and trying to make up her answers to these questions, that she came very near forgetting her part, and taking Macy into the house by her customary back-door entrance, instead of round the front door, as she had been requested.

How still the house was ! Could

it be that they had made a mistake, and she had returned an hour too soon? No, probably not, for that was her mother's care, and she had come away as soon as she had sent her; neither had they loitered a moment by the way.

Macy bore the change of doors a little too quietly. If she had only asked a question, or made the least opposition, Jessie felt that she should have been surer, and would have liked it better.

There were no prints of little feet on the smooth walk, nor on the spotless door-steps. The shades were all dropped closely over the windows, just as Macy always left them when she went away. There must be a mistake somewhere. Jessie's heart began to tremble just as she saw the

corner of a shade lifted the least in the world, and a black eye peeping out from under it.

All right ! and Macy had not seen it. Indeed, everything was so natural that if she had had her suspicions they were all done away with now ; the color went out of her cheek, and she looked quite like herself again, so that she laughed very merrily when Jessie said :

“ Let’s knock at the door, and play we are company.”

Both hands were immediately giving a loud summons, and in an instant the door was opened from the inside, and there stood Kitty Bell, with her pretty white dress and long, blue sash, all dressed up as if it was for a real party.

She made a very low courtesy, and

invited them in. Then opening the door to the parlor, there they were, every one of them, even Lucy Ray and Matilda, bowing, and smiling, and putting on all the airs of grown-up women.

“How do you do, Miss Barton? How do you do, Miss Ross?” and twenty hands were extended as if each separate one belonged alone to the lady of the house; and O how earnestly all the forty eyes looked into Macy’s face!

At first she smiled, then the tears came, then she smiled again, and such a bevy of loving smiles returned hers that another tear could not have come, do its best; and then suddenly, as if they must make amends for their enforced silence, there burst out such a torrent of welcomes and

exclamations as almost frightened Macy; certainly they did frighten the color from her face, and she became so pale that Susan Ross, who was present at the request of the parents to take a general superintendence, had to come from her hiding place, and restore order.

Then began the sports in earnest; and such merry, romping, happy children never met together in Sherburne before.

In the general hilarity Macy Barton was for a time forgotten as an object of special interest, and it was very well for her that it was so, for Macy was not over-strong, and a little excitement fatigued her more than a great deal of play did other children. She sat down, looking on; and first one child and then another

came naturally and rested with her ; so by the time the first hour was over she was quite ready to take her place as lady of the house.

In the middle of the afternoon came the entertainment. This was more important even than the play ; and toward the part of the woods where they knew the table was preparing, many anxious eyes had turned as the plays proceeded. Susan disappeared from among them, and this some of the members of the committee whispered was a sure sign that everything would be in readiness before long.

At last a flag was flung out suddenly from the top of a tall spruce-tree.

"There it is ! there it is !" shouted half a dozen voices together. "Come !

come! Macy Barton, it is your place to go first; you are the mistress to-day, you know."

So Macy, holding very fast on to Jessie's hand, went as the leaders directed her, and between the four old pines, where she had sat so often and heard Jessie tell stories about just such a scene, was the prettiest table that could be spread.

We must not stop to describe all or any of the good things which there were upon it, but must pass on to the object for which we have given the story of Macy's surprise party.

After the feast was over the children began to gather around Macy, and wish to talk over with her the surprise.

"Did you ever suspect the least about it, Macy Barton? Did you

wonder what we were talking about at school all the time when we were whispering, and you couldn't know?"

"Did you see one of us coming here? Did you see the tin pail Ruth threw down close by the fence? she hadn't time to pick it up, for Fred was in the tree by the road, and whistled just that moment to say you were coming, and she had to scamper back as fast as she could. We were so frightened for fear you saw the end of her pink dress, though we shut the door as quick as ever we could."

"Did you see Jane pull up the corner of the shade and peep out? We almost cried, we were so vexed; but she is an ugly little thing, and always will do just as she has a mind to."

"I aint ugly either," said Jane, with her mouth full of raspberry tart. "I only put one eye—so," and she held up her handkerchief and peeped under it; "nobody could have seen me, and Macy didn't; did you, Macy?"

Thus appealed to, Macy spoke for the first time. Her young friends had hurried question upon question without waiting for an answer.

"No," she said, "I didn't see you."

"But I did," said Jessie, "and I thought it was very careless in you, Jane."

"That was because you were looking; you never would have seen only one black eye if you hadn't been, I know," tartly responded Jane.

"It wasn't kind in you, though," said Ruth, "for you troubled all the

girls just to please yourself, and that is what Miss Goddard calls true selfishness."

"I aint selfish neither," said Jane, beginning to pout, "and if you call me any more things I'll go right home and tell my mother, and take the rest of the plum cake home with me too."

"You've eaten it all up," said Ruth, evidently bent on provoking Jane and making a quarrel if she could; "you'll scrape the crumbs if you carry any, I think; won't she, girls?"

No one answered. The children had been so very happy that they were all now tired, and every one knows how easy it is to make tired little folks fretful. Macy acted immediately as peacemaker, and though she

succeeded in stilling this trouble, she unfortunately woke up another which could not be so easily controlled.

"Macy Barton hasn't said," said Ellen Ray, suddenly, "whether she suspected any thing about this party before she opened the door and found us all here. Did you, Macy?"

Now the color came and went in Macy's face, the more so because every eye, even Susan Ross's, was fixed steadily upon her.

"Did you, Macy? Say—did you? did you?" It seemed to Macy's confused senses as if a hundred voices were ringing the question over and over in her ear, "Macy, answer, did you?"

"Pooh, she did, I know," said a great stout girl who never liked

Macy very well. "See how she blushes. I say it was real mean; she had no business to have known a word about it."

"Who did tell you, Macy?" said several, taking it now for granted. "It was real mean, as Jane says; you ought to tell us. Who told you? I declare I never will speak to her again as long as I live."

"Don't be in a hurry, children," said Susan Ross, coming up, to Macy's great relief. "Macy has not said any one told her yet; you talk so fast and are so noisy you don't give her a chance to answer. Keep still a moment; I don't think myself there is a child here who would do such a wicked thing as to break her promise; and if I understood you, you all promised not to tell her."

"So we did," said a chorus of voices, "and it wasn't I," "nor I," "nor I."

"Stop! perhaps she did not know," said Susan; "and you are getting up all this excitement for nothing. Macy, did you know?"

"Yes," said Macy in a faltering tone, hanging down her head.

If a thunder cloud had broken suddenly over them the children could not have been more astonished. Even Jessie Ross, though, as we have seen, she had her suspicions before, looked almost frightened as the plain avowal was made.

To Susan herself it was entirely unexpected; so poor Macy sat trembling and all ready to cry some minutes before she spoke to her again.

"Who told you?" at last asked Susan.

"I can't tell you," said Macy, without raising her eyes.

"Why not?"

"Because I said I wouldn't."

"That isn't fair," chimed in the chorus again. "Macy Barton, you ought to tell."

"I can't," said Macy firmly.

"You can; your tongue is your own," said Ruth. "You won't get off that way."

Susan hardly knew what to do, but she said quietly:

"Macy, if you are really at liberty to tell who told you, I wish you would. We shall have to suspect everybody if you do not, and that is hardly fair when it comes to being suspected of not telling the truth."

"Indeed, I cannot. I promised before I knew what it was, and you know I can't, Susan."

Susan now saw her way out. "Look here, children," she said, "you hear Macy promised not to tell who told her; and now, if she should go and tell you, how would she be any better than the other child who broke her promise and told her."

"Because," answered Ellen Dane, "she only promised one girl, and that girl promised all of us; and it is a great deal worse to break your word to so many than it is to a single one."

"A promise is a promise, all the same, made to one or a thousand," said Susan decidedly; and she wanted to say a few words more about *rash* vows, as the Bible calls them,

but when she looked around at the excited faces, she thought it would be better to wait until another time. "For my part, as the thing is done, and can't be helped, and as you have had a very nice time, I think it would be better to let it all pass, and not want to know any more about it."

"We must know, we will," said the chorus, "and we won't speak to the girl again as long as we live."

"There is another rash promise," said Susan, not able to withhold all the sermon, which she quite longed to preach. "The reason, children, you all break your promises so often is, you make so many foolish ones. It's very wrong; you acquire the habit of telling untruths in this way before you know it."

“We don’t when we say ‘honor bright,’” said a very little girl.

All the children laughed. In the general fault-finding the special offender was likely to escape. This Susan saw, and she helped them to that point as rapidly as she could.

“Now come,” she said, “let us have a grand finishing-off game of ‘Hot Cockles!’ and you see if we don’t know who told. Why, it’s only that child who must suffer; we can play away, and not have to keep thinking about her. And if it comes our turn to play with her, why, it’s a great deal better not to feel as if we did not want to touch her, or speak to her, or look at her, as we all should; for there isn’t but one child here, I know, and that is the one who has

told the falsehood, who would be willing to kiss a lip that could do it. Its the worst part of being untrue, children, next to the displeasure of God, that it makes every friend we have in the world feel ashamed of us, and wish they had never known and never loved us."

"We won't be such children, will we?"

"No! no! Not for the world. It's mean to tell a lie. It's wicked to tell a lie. God says all liars shall be burned up," said Kitty Cole, a very small child, creeping as close as she could to Susan, and looking straight up in her face. "Will he burn up the one of us that told Macy?"

"You didn't do it," said Susan, kissing the child, "so you need not trouble about it, Kitty; God will do

just what is right at the judgment day."

"Not till then !" exclaimed Kitty ; "that will be a great way off, and she will be very sorry before it comes."

"Then God will forgive her."

"And take her to heaven," persisted Kitty, "'cause we all, all Miss Goddard's school, want to go there."

"I hope so," said Susan, smiling ; "but come, now, let it pass and have a grand game before we go home, for the sun has gone almost down behind the woods, and we must be at home on Saturday night at sunset, you know."

To the play they went, and as Susan spared no pains, and Fred and Robert were admitted to join them, it proved the noisiest, merriest of all the games.

How quickly the sun went down behind those old green woods ; how it cast its shadows longer and longer and deeper and deeper, until some of the smallest children began to grow timid and think of their mothers and home, and wish they were there.

Then Susan told them all it was time to go, and as every child had put away her own basket and bonnet, there was very little confusion in getting everything together, and forming into the procession, whose last act was to conduct Macy home.

There were but two drawbacks to the whole affair. Something had detained George, so that he had not been in to the feast, or to receive the present from Mr. Swift before the children ; and the other was, the treachery of one of their number

had left an unpleasant impression on the children's minds. The first trouble was, however, to be partly done away with, for just before they reached the house George's whistle was heard coming quickly in that direction, and they had only time to halt, and open to the right and left, before the surprised boy was among them. Now came another delay, but Susan took care that it should not be long, for she saw George was very tired from a hard day's work, and needed rest more than play. One thing, however, she could not help noticing, that during this delay Helen Norton was very busy, running from one group of children to another, whispering in their ears.

CHAPTER III.

SUSPICION.

THERE were many very weary little girls to creep into bed in Sherburne on this Saturday night. Quite a large proportion of them went without looking at their Sabbath-school lessons, and even those who faithfully tried to commit it had to do as Kitty Cole said she did: "Hold her eyes wide open with her fingers, or else they would shut down so that she could not see a word."

One of Miss Goddard's parting injunctions, when the school children went home on Friday night, always was:

“Be sure and get your lesson for Sunday-school to-morrow. You will be happier and better children all next week if you do.”

For this reason, and because Miss Goddard's wishes were laws, as a good teacher's always are, her children generally took much pains to be well prepared for the Sabbath; and to have one of them for a pupil, one to set a good example to the others, was a very desirable matter to every Sabbath-school teacher. Instead of feeling as so many teachers do now, when they see this, that, and the other child enter their class, “Well, here comes Jane, or Mary, or Sarah, but I know they have not half learned their lesson, they never do,” these teachers said to themselves: “Ah, here is Lucy Ray. I am so glad

she has come. I am always sure of one good lesson when she is here." Or: "There comes Susy Holt. I might have known she would; she never stays away unless she is sick; and when she is here she never misses a question, and is so attentive and quiet." Perhaps they say: "Ellen Smith and Kate Darling, Miss Goddard says there are not two better children in Sherburne. How pleased I am that they belong to my class, and I know they will be here long before the bell has stopped tolling."

If none of these teachers knew about Macy Barton's surprise party, they would have been very much surprised themselves at many of the lessons which Miss Goddard's children brought to them the following

Sabbath ; but the "secret" had been pretty generally whispered about, and as such events were of very rare occurrence, when the teachers saw the sleepy eyes and somewhat pale faces of the children, they quickly understood that they must not expect too much that day.

It was interesting to watch how the children really struggled to make a good recitation, and keep their minds fixed upon what was being said by their teacher ; but in spite of the best efforts of many of them, their thoughts would go wandering down to the green woods, hovering over the pretty dainty-laden table, or close to the river, where the water sang such a sleepy lullaby, that, yes, in very truth, they were nodding.

Mary Lacey said almost aloud, when Lucy Ray was repeating her hymn, without knowing it, "I don't see who could have told Macy Barton;" and when her teacher looked at her astonished, she blushed and nearly cried, while the other children laughed much more than was proper in the Sabbath-school.

With their eyes fixed as steadily as they could upon the white cravat and black whiskers of Mr. Day, their minister, it was wonderful how few distinctly saw anything more than the figure of a man standing up in the pulpit, and I am afraid there were several there who would have found it very difficult to repeat the text or any of the heads of the discourse.

Some children keep the Sabbath holy because they know they must.

Their parents are watchful, and never allow them to do anything by which they will learn habits of treating it lightly, or partly breaking it; but there are some children who really love it.

“Which is the pleasantest day of all your pleasant week?” a lady once asked Kitty Cole.

“O Sunday! Sunday!” said Kitty, clapping her hands, “Sunday is always the best.”

“But *why* is Sunday the best?”

“Because—because I *know* it is.” This was Kitty’s answer, and a better one I do not think ever was given. *I know it is.* Why was this such a good answer? Can any of my young readers tell me?

This Sunday Kitty’s eyes would not hold open long, even with the

small tired fingers to assist them ; so when they were shut up tight, and her mother found the round red cheek laying down on the open leaf of her Bible, she took her up, and the next thing Kitty knew it was late on Sabbath morning, and very near time for the bell to ring for Sabbath-school.

Jessie Ross waked tired, and could have fretted if it had been any other day than Sunday ; but she too, as well as Kitty Cole, loved the Sabbath, and when its soft, pleasant light, or Luly's soft hands, she never knew which, waked her, she remembered at once what day it was, and felt so pleased that she could give it to God.

Now, I do not mean that any such distinct idea of giving it to God came into her head, or even that she thought any more of God than to re-

member when she jumped from her bed first of all to kneel down and say her prayers ; but she had this thought, which perhaps in the sight of God was as distinctly devotional as if she had said, I wish to give this day to Thee ; it was :

“ O I am so glad it is Sunday ! now I shall go to Sabbath-school and to church all day.” Perhaps there came afterward thoughts of seeing Macy Barton, and some other children, but that was all right.

The very reason God makes children love so easily is because it pleases him to see them think of others besides themselves, and to wish to have them united with them in doing what is right.

So to-day, as Macy stepped up on the side steps, Jessie, with eyes full of

love, stood ready to welcome her, and it was a pretty sight the way they clasped each other's hands, never letting go for an instant until they came to the pew door, into which Macy must first enter.

Helen Norton was the only one of all the surprise party who did not go to Sabbath-school, and as she was at best very irregular, no one seemed to notice that she was not there.

Lucy Ray came panting in very late. She had come by Mrs. Norton's, and as Helen was out swinging on the gate, had stopped to talk with her only one minute; but the one minute slipped on into ten, fifteen, twenty, and the bell had ceased tolling before she could get away.

Helen had something very important to tell her, we should judge, from

the animated conversation which took place, and the thoughtful sober face Lucy brought with her into Sabbath-school.

Between services at noon, when all the children who came from a distance stayed, Lucy was busy talking, first with one, then with another; and there was one thing very noticeable, she left the child looking troubled with whom she had been talking.

Sunday afternoon it was not surprising that the mothers were busy keeping the little girls awake. Some, to be sure, allowed their children to put their heads down in the easiest place they could make for them, and were very thankful to have them go to sleep, for the sake of having them still; but the more conscientious

parents knew and felt that the habit of sleeping, formed in early childhood, frequently for the convenience of those who had the care of children, grew with their growth and strengthened with their strength, and not unfrequently the child who has been soothed to sleep by the careless mother becomes in mature age, if too decorous to sleep in the house of God, an irreverent, listless listener.

Those parents who felt so with the children to-day had a task indeed, and were grateful when service was fairly over; the little folks could wake themselves up in the fresh air. Even Mr. Day from his pulpit had remarked how quiet the usually restless part of his congregation were, and was quite sure his own Alice was asleep behind the palm-leaf fan, which

she tried to hold so steadily as to conceal her nods.

Helen Norton had not been at church to-day, and yet, staying at home as she was, and apparently doing nothing but injury to herself and others, God was teaching through her means a great truth, one which every child in Sherburne would remember perhaps, as they were so sleepy, longer than they did Mr. Day's excellent sermon. What this truth was I hope my readers will also let Helen teach them.

Children never can *wait*, every one knows that, and so many eyes were shut that Sabbath night with a slight impatience that all those long, dark hours must go by before they could go to school. Every one with whom Lucy Ray had talked, and many to

whom she had not spoken a word, were alike impatient to have Monday morning come.

As soon as it was sufficiently near nine for them to be allowed to go (Miss Goddard had forbidden them to come sooner than a quarter before, for she said those who came too early always came for play, not for study) they began to run rapidly along toward the school-house. All fatigue and sleepiness were gone, and as if there was a new interest which even more than commonly united them, they gathered in little groups as their various paths led them at last to the one meeting point.

If a person could have listened without being seen, such are parts of the conversation which they would have overheard :

"I don't care ; I say it's real mean."

"So do I. I wouldn't have done it for the world."

"Nor I either. I do hate a tell-tale."

"So do I, worse than anything else."

"But this wasn't tell-tale only ; it was a downright falsehood. Don't you remember how she made us promise over and over again that none of us would open our lips to tell one single word ?"

"Yes ; and she said a hundred times she wouldn't."

"Let us tell Miss Goddard ; she believes every word she says always."

"So did I," "and I," "and I."

"I never knew her in all my life tell a story before ; I believed her just as much as could be."

"She always said it was only cowards who had to speak falsehoods."

"But this wasn't exactly a falsehood; it was breaking a promise."

"What is the difference? I should like to know."

"O the difference is, if you take my apple and eat it up, then say you did not, you say what is not true; but a promise isn't eating anything."

"No; but can't you say what is not true about anything but eating? I say if a girl promises she won't tell, and then does, she tells a falsehood."

"Why, yes, of course; because she does what isn't true. It isn't true she did not eat the apple, because she did; and it is not true she kept her promise, because she didn't."

"Yes, that is it; and she broke hers. Helen Norton says she did."

"I've known Helen Norton to ever and ever so many times. She needn't go to talking about other girls now. I don't believe a word *she* says one time in ten."

"Nor I; but she knows now, she says she does."

"Did she hear her?"

"No; but she is so intimate, you know. Helen says she always tells her every single thing. She wonders we didn't think of it, and not let her know any more than we did Macy herself."

"I wish we had; how grand it would have been! And then, after all the pains we took, to have it for nothing! Why, we might as well have gone right down from school, and talked with her all about it, for she knew."

"It was good fun, though; and my mother says, what does it really matter if she did know? it was as pleasant as it could be any way."

"But we won't any of us speak to her, or have any thing to do with her. I never will trust her again, even if it is not a secret, as long as I live, that is certain."

"I shouldn't have believed it. She don't tell falsehoods generally. I don't think there is a girl that always says just right like her in Sherburne."

"Yes, you always stand up for her. I don't see what you do it for. She don't care a cent for you."

"I can't help it. I do for her."

"I would have more pride if I were you. It's mean to love a girl who don't love you, and we are going

to pull the feather out of Jessie Ross's cap," said Helen Norton, who came up to the two last speakers in time to overhear what they were saying.

"There will more grow if you do, Helen Norton," answered the child who loved Jessie. "Her cap is tip top, and it takes a taller girl than you are to reach it."

Now Helen was one of the shortest girls in school, though she was twelve years old; and as her ambition lay in being in every thing first but in goodness, she was vexed and soured when any one referred to her stature. This the girls all very well knew, and, when desirous to vex her, they would often make just such allusions as this child had now.

But this morning Helen was more intent on putting down Jessie than

elevating herself; so she colored, looked cross, but contented herself with nothing more than a defiant toss of her head.

When Jessie came into the school room there was an evident sensation among the children. Some pinched their next neighbors, while others pushed their elbows into their friends' side, a gesture more emphatic than affectionate.

Jessie was very sensitive, and hardly had she crossed the school room and taken her seat, when she made the discovery that something was different from what it had been ever before. Whenever she looked round, she found some one looking steadily at her, and then they would drop their eyes, and pretend they did not see her smile.

This was entirely new treatment to Jessie, and she began to feel restless and uncomfortable, for what reason she could not have told had she been questioned.

Macy Barton's face was the only one which had the familiar look; and almost as if Macy knew how troubled she was, she never turned her eyes that way but Macy's met them with their sweetest expression of love.

Miss Goddard was not any slower than Jessie in perceiving that something had gone wrong among the children; but she always waited for them to come to her, unless the excitement prevented them from learning their lessons as they should. She, however, kept her eyes upon those who were busiest with the secret

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signs, and before the first recess, had made herself quite familiar with the most active ones in the plot against our little Jessie.

It was a long, weary day at school to Jessie. She tried in vain to assume her place among the children; every one but Macy shunned her more and more as the hours wore on, and at night, instead of having a crowd around her, she swung her sunbonnet on her finger, and went off quite alone, down the brook path, home.

"They treat me," she thought suddenly in the midst of her grief, "just as they did Macy last week; perhaps they are going to give me a surprise party next. How foolish in me not to think of it, instead of half-crying as I have been all day." And now

Jessie's footstep became very light and joyous, and she tripped along singing a sweet hymn, so soft and low, that many little birds stopped their own songs, and hopping as close to her as they dared, turned over their round heads, and had a droll look, as if their eyes must do double duty, and answer for hearing as well as for seeing.

When she reached home there was not a trace of the shadow which had rested on her bright face all day, and the baby held out his arms to her, and crowed in great glee at the idea of the frolic which he saw was awaiting him.

No sooner was Jessie out of sight from the school room than Macy Barton was fairly besieged with questioners, until she did not know

what to say or which way to turn.

“Pooh! you needn’t pretend to keep it to yourself any longer, Macy,” said one; “we all know it was Jessie Ross told you about the surprise party.”

“You may as well own up and done with it,” said another; “we know it just as well as if you had told us.”

“Silence gives consent,” said a third; “if it wasn’t Jessie Ross you would say so as quick as anything, Macy; you always take her part when you can; you know you do.”

“Yes, so you do, and we are not going to have anything more to do with Jessie, not a single one of us. Helen Norton says Miss Goddard has

always believed her, just as if she was the Bible, and now she should like to know what she would say. Helen declares she has caught her telling stories hundreds of times, but she could never make any one think she did."

"I never knew her say what was not so in her whole life," said Macy in a quiet tone, though her eyes shone very bright, and her lip quivered as she did so.

"What do you call telling you when she promised she wouldn't, Macy Barton, just answer me that?"

"Girls!" said Macy, stopping suddenly and drawing herself up to her full height, "you provoke me beyond endurance. You have no right, and you know you have not, every one of you, as well as I do, to question me

so, when I have told you already that the girl who told me made me promise, before I had any idea of what it could be about, that I never would tell who told me, never would say it was not anybody if I was asked a thousand times, and I did promise, so I can't say. You know it isn't fair to keep hunting poor Jessie Ross down in this way. Susan Ray, say, honor bright, did *you* ever know Jessie say what was not true in all your life. I mean, did she ever tell a falsehood that you felt sure of?"

"Never," said Susan, unhesitatingly; "I always liked to tell her secrets; she was as safe as the very bottom of the ocean."

"Thank you," said Macy, with a very grateful look. "Lucy, did you ever know any?"

"No," said Lucy, a little more doubtfully; "but Helen says she has heard her over and over again, and I believe her."

"Helen Norton," said Kitty Cole, jumping up on a rock so she might stand on a level with the large girls, "is a naughty, wicked thing, and tells a story herself when she says Jessie does. Jessie is the truthfulest, darlingest, bestest girl in school; so there."

The girls all laughed, and a good laugh is one of the surest signs that children are overcoming any little unpleasant excitement.

"Come, now!" said Macy, taking advantage of the slight change, "there is one thing which is only fair, and you will all see it. You shall not condemn Jessie until some one

can prove her guilty. Do you agree to this? I can't say a word, because you see I promised I would not; but if the girl who told me don't confess herself, as she will if there is anything good about her, why you just go to Miss Goddard, she sets everything right, you know."

"In less than no time," said Susan Ray, "only now, don't you realize that she won't hear a word against Jessie Ross's truth. Why, if Jessie *says* so it's enough. I don't believe Jessie herself could make her think any other way if she should go right up to her and confess—do you?"

"I don't know," answered Macy; "but one thing I am certain of, I never knew a child have a character for anything but she had earned it, and

if Miss Goddard, who knows us all so much better than we know ourselves, has such great faith in Jessie's word, why, I for one don't see why we shouldn't have the same confidence in her about it that we do in other things."

The girls looked at each other. It was very plain they "did not see" either, but they had another bias which they could not so easily throw off.

"If Miss Goddard says," continued Macy, "that Susan Ray is the best arithmetic scholar she has in school, who doubts it?"

Susan hung down her head, and looked a little bashful, but several voices said, "We all know she is; she is at the head of the class five days out of six."

"And Jennie Remsen," continued Macy, "is the best in grammar."

"Hetty Brown is most as good."

"Yes, but she can't parse like Jennie. Miss Goddard gives her the prize every term, and we believe she deserves it."

"Well, don't preach any more," said Helen Norton, coming back from the fence where she had seemingly been busy picking berries; "your sermon is as long as Mr. Day's, and not a whit more interesting. Come, girls! Miss Goddard don't allow us, you know, to stand loitering around here when we ought to be half way home. I don't believe in your saints upon earth, and guess, if the truth was known, Jessie's garments, mantles, or whatever you call them, would be found to have as many spots upon

them as some of ours, poor sinful mortals that we are."

The girls laughed, and more than half the impression of what Macy had said was done away with, so that, after all, they carried home the idea that one whom they, as well as Miss Goddard, had full confidence in, was not perfect; as Helen said, "had some spots on her saint's mantles."

Was this a pleasant thought to these children? We will hope not; none of us like to think our friends a great deal better than we are ourselves. Perhaps every child was conscious that sometimes in her life she did or said something not perfectly trustworthy, and was glad that at last fault would be justly found with the one who had so often been to her a silent reproof for what she

had done that was untrue ; but it is pleasanter to think they felt sorry in the very bottom of their hearts, felt as if they had lost something themselves, and that each one had a secret hope that in some way or other it would be proved that some one else, and not Jessie Ross, had been the traitor ; for with this unpleasant name they had begun to designate the person who told about the surprise party.

CHAPTER IV.

GEORGE'S TROUBLE.

WHEN Macy returned to her solitary home she felt very much troubled. It seemed to her so hard that her dearest friend should be unjustly accused, and be at that moment suffering from a suspicion which, if she could only speak, she would instantly remove. Over and over again she determined never, *never* (and she emphasized this word so loud that the echoes in the adjoining woods took it up, and repeated it after her) to make such a rash promise again. "I might have known," she said sorrowfully, "if such a girl as Helen Norton wanted me to promise to keep a se-

cret there must be something wrong about it. What could have made me do it? O if I only could tell George! he is so good, and thinks a great way, he would see out of it I am sure, but I can't even tell him; and Helen Norton, I don't see how the girl dares look me in the face, when she knows as well as I do all about it."

Macy grew very uneasy. She went down to the water's edge, and threw stones into the still lake, just above the old mill dam. It seemed to her as if every ripple that gathered round them bore away some of the heavy feeling from her heart; for although she loved her young friends, no one but Jessie was so dear to her as this river, so clear, so bright, so silent. She had always sought it, always in

her loneliness talked with it, always told those thousand things which she could never breathe to any living ear but her brother's.

Macy talked to it to-night, sometimes in whispers, sometimes aloud, until she heard George coming with rustling footsteps through the wood.

"No whistle to-night!" thought Macy; "I wonder what has happened;" and tossing her last stone hastily into the river, without waiting to watch the ripples, she hastened to meet him. Her first glance at him told her that her conjecture was right, and that something had happened.

With true woman's instinct she slipped her hand quietly into his, and led him into the house, where his late supper was waiting him; but she

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Macy comforts her Brother.

soon saw that he could not eat ; and as he noticed that she was watching him, he pushed his chair hastily back, and said :

“Come, Macy ! let us go down to the river ; I feel as if it would do me good to hear the waters roll and tumble down there. I shall enjoy it better even than your nice tea. I declare what a famous cook you grow to be.”

Macy smiled, and the two went out-silently together until they reached the moss-covered rock directly under the old wheel :

“Here,” said George, “let us sit down ; the spray dashes over us splendidly, and it feels good when a boy is as hot and dusty as I am to-night. I believe I have worked like a horse to-day, and all for nothing too.” He

said, sinking his voice a note or two, "all for nothing, that's the worst of it."

"All for nothing! what do you mean?" asked Macy, slipping her small hand again into her brother's. Hard work was making George's frame brawny and stiff; but if it had turned it to iron it must have waited until it had reached her heart too before it could keep that gentle, loving touch from coming with its soft comfort into his very soul.

"Mean, Macy!" he said, and for the first time that day a tear glistened in the boy's eye, "why I mean simply this, that Mr. Swift has almost to-day accused me of telling a falsehood; and if he don't take it back, and say he is sorry, I never will work another season for him as long as I live."

Macy's eyes dilated with the utmost astonishment. What would come next? Jessie Ross accused of falsehood all day, and George to come home with the same thing at night! Why, what was the world coming to?

"He didn't say so," continued George, hurriedly, "but he looked it, and his actions spoke louder than words."

"What was it?" asked Macy, with a trembling voice.

"Why, it doesn't seem quite worth while to trouble you, little pet," said George, drawing her fondly to him; "but as we have got darker days before us than we have seen yet, I don't know as anything will be gained by keeping it to myself, and I wouldn't tell anybody else in the

world that Mr. Swift has dared to suspect me."

Macy felt George's breast heave, as if the quick temper were gathering there, so she put her head a little closer upon it and was silent.

"You see, Macy, Mr. Towne, the boss, has a boy just about my age; but he is a great, lazy fellow, and never works unless he is made to. He is always getting into scrapes; never minds truth, honesty, or anything else. Everybody knows he is the worst boy in Sherburne. He is so bad that I really felt sorry for him, and for his father's sake, for he is kind to me and always has been, I determined I would try and see if I couldn't do something toward making him a better boy. So, when his father asked me if I would let him

work along with me, and try to make it pleasant for him, so he would be willing to stick to it a little while, I was right glad to, and I talked so much to keep him amused that I often had to stay, as you remember, to finish up what I thought a fair day's work out of time. Well, things went on pretty nicely for a while; but Rob soon became tired of being steady, and began his pranks. It was not any use anything I could do, so I told his father; and I thought, after all, Mr. Towne felt more inclined to blame me that he was uneasy again, than to thank me for the pains I had taken to keep him quiet; so I determined to let him alone, and mind my own business. You see, Macy, it isn't the pleasantest thing in the world to be doing your best, and

then not have any one thank you for it."

"Did you wish Mr. Towne to say, 'Thank you?'" asked Macy, simply.

"Why, no, not exactly that; but I wished him to remember that if I did work hard I was only a boy, and had rather be fishing, playing ball, or even whittling, than making up hours because I spent my time trying to keep Rob contented."

"Yes," said Macy, "that was fair."

"I think so; but when he was rather surly, and ordered me about, if Rob didn't come to his work, or went off when he had no business to, as if it were my fault, why then I began to feel, 'Well, Mr. Towne, you are yourself, and I am myself. Mr. Swift hires us both, and our time is his. Now mine shall belong to

him during the lawful hours, and yours may belong to you, and Rob too, for all that I care. I am not to overwork and be thumped round too! It isn't quite self-respectful enough to suit my fancy if I am only a boy.'"

"But it was kind in you, Georgy," interrupted Macy.

"Yes, kind enough perhaps, but there is a bound for everything. At any rate, I couldn't, or wouldn't, which is pretty much the same thing, do working and amusing any longer; so the consequence was, that Rob declared it was duller than school to hoe away there all day; that I was cross, if I wouldn't help him finish the task his father had given him; that he would run away and go to sea, and all such things.

“So it went on until a week ago, when his father set him to hoeing on the great corn-field. Why, there are ten acres or more, full of corn, and a prime crop it was too. Mr. Swift was prouder of it than of his new span of horses, I believe. He used to bring all his company down to see it, and really talked as if it would make him a rich man.

“When Rob found this had all to be hoed over, and that he could not go gunning a single hour until it was done, he vowed he would finish it a quicker way than with the hoe; if he didn't, he would be fool enough to deserve to plod away there all the rest of his life. He is so often talking and threatening in that way, that I didn't think anything more about it until I went to work this morning.

I met Mr. Swift hurrying here after me as fast as he could drive Jenny; and he said as soon as he could speak; for he was so angry that at first he could only turn pale and not open his lips, that I had purposely left the gate unlatched when I put up the cattle for the night in the barn-yard, and that they had gone through it into his corn-field, and the whole field was destroyed.

“There were fifty head of cattle, and what they had not eaten it seemed as if they had purposely trampled down. I never saw such a sight in my life!”

“But you did fasten the gate?” asked Macy eagerly.

“Of course I did, and not only fastened it, but, for greater security, tied it with a rope in a true lover’s

knot. This I knew nothing but human fingers could untie, and I tell you," said George, "I took special pains, because I felt sure Mr. Swift wouldn't trust all his hands. Hungry cattle and a ten-acre corn-field have a wonderful fancy the one for the other, and it was something for a boy no older than I am to stand between them.

"Well, when Mr. Swift grew a little calmer, and I did too, for I was so frightened at first that I felt almost as pale as he looked, he said he didn't wonder I turned pale; it was, he believed, not carelessness, but because I did it on purpose. Mr. Towne thought so, and so he began to think. Then, Macy, if I had died for it, I could not say a word to defend myself, and when he got angry

at me because I wouldn't speak, and took up the horsewhip to strike me, I sprang at him like a mad dog, pulled the whip out of his hand and broke it over my knee ; but the fight for it frightened Jenny, and she started off into a keen run, so I threw myself down the steep bank, ran to the stream, forded it, where I never dared to jump in before, and caught her by her head just as she was turning on to that narrow bridge over Seman's Dam. If she had swerved an inch from the track there she would have upset the wagon, and Mr. Swift been killed as likely as not."

"How dreadful !" said Macy, with a slight shudder.

"Yes, it would have been dreadful if it had happened, but a miss is as good as a mile ; and when Jenny was

fairly stopped, and Mr. Swift safe out of the carriage, he said a good deal about my having saved his life, and so on; but I told him as I helped to start the horse it was no more than fair that I should stop him.

“I thought he might perhaps now feel differently about the gate being left open, I did; so as soon as I saw him alone walking round looking at the field, I left my work, went to him, and told him all I could remember about it. I was certain I shut the gate, because I always had, and because I had borrowed a piece of new cord that very night of Rob to do it with.

“We went together to examine it, and I showed Mr. Swift, as clear as could be, that the cord had been cut with a sharp knife, before the gate

was open, by some one who did not know how to untie my lover's knot, for there was my knot as tight and as sound as ever. Then Mr. Swift seemed to believe me, and sending for Mr. Towne, he pointed out to him what I had shown him, and told him the whole story, straightforward, as I had; but I couldn't help seeing that Mr. Towne looked uneasy, and as if he did not want to believe a thing about it, particularly when Mr. Swift said:

“Now, Towne, as boss, this is your business, and I depend upon you to ferret the matter out. Whoever has cut this rope did it maliciously, and shall suffer the whole penalty of the law.’

“When I saw Mr. Towne's face, I suspected for the first time that it

was Rob, and that he thought so too; and then I remembered what he had said about destroying the field, and a hundred other things which I never should have thought of again if it hadn't been for the gate; but I didn't say a word, only I was so thankful it wasn't my business to find it out. Rob came to his work as usual, but he had a sly, wicked look, and I saw him laughing every time he happened to look in the direction of the stumps in the corn-field. As soon as he was left alone with me he called out :

“ ‘I say, Georgy ! aint you glad that ere hoeing was done up at such short notice. Mamma Swift will have some rich cream for sale, an extra supply, eh ?’

“ ‘You did it, Rob ; you know you

did,' I said, and I was sorry the moment the words had passed my lips, for I saw by the stubborn, wicked look which came over his face, that if he did he never would confess, and I know he is the most stubborn liar in all Sherburne.

" 'Prove it, will you,' he said, throwing down his hoe and coming up to me.

" 'Keep about your work, Rob, I am not going to fight,' I made out to answer; but I tell you, Macy, my fingers fairly ached to have a grip at him. I said, 'I know' you did it, and you know so too; that is enough.'

" 'And you will go and tell Mr. Swift so, and ruin me for life, I suppose,' said Bob.

" 'I shall tell of no boy living, though I long to see you well

thrashed, Robert Towne; you deserve it as richly as ever a man who murdered to hang on the gallows; and if no one else does it, you and I will settle it together some day. Till then, I leave you to the pleasant state of your own conscience.'

"'Big fool!' muttered Rob; but, Macy, I couldn't help it. I caught him before the last word was fairly out, and hit him such a rap between his shoulders that he rolled on the ground like a ninepin. I never saw any thing like it. If I had just let him alone I should have done a much wiser thing; but I couldn't, that's all; I couldn't if—"

"I am sorry," said Macy meekly.

"So am I; but when a boy's blood is up, it's up, and that is all about it. He screamed so loud you

would have thought I had murdered him, and for an instant I did not know but I had. His father and a half dozen men came running to us, and then, why, Rob had it all his own way. I was fairly ashamed of myself, and didn't open my mouth; he saw I was, and took advantage of it."

"What did he do?" asked Macy.

"Only swore that I had left the gate open myself, that he saw me do it, besides hearing me say that I meant to play the old fellow, meaning Mr. Swift, some trick as soon as I could, to pay him off for the hard work he made me do. His father believes him, or makes believe he does, which is worse. And Mr. Swift himself, if he could get over the feeling that I had saved his life would

believe him too, for Robert makes out a very plausible story. I declare, as I heard how he made one thing tell on another I could hardly help believing myself that I had said or done some of the things of which he accused me."

"Mr. Swift won't believe him long," said Macy.

"I can't say," answered George, and for the first time there was a touch of despondency in his voice. "If he does we are in trouble, that is all."

"How?" asked Macy. "You did not do it, and you are sorry you struck Rob. I don't see how we can come to any harm."

"Simply so, Macy. If Mr. Swift thinks I did not speak the truth, and did let the cattle out of the yard, don't you see, he accuses me of

two things, either of which are enough to blast a boy's character for life. One is falsehood, and the other is the very meanest kind of revenge. No good master would hire such a boy. I wouldn't work for a man who would do it. And if I can't get work, then what, Macy?"

"Then God will take care of us," said Macy, folding up her hands and looking steadily into the spray, which at that instant sent up a bright rainbow over the falls, as if to remind her how sure God's promises were, and how always ready.

"Yes," said George, his eyes following the direction of hers; "but, after all, it comes pretty hard on a boy who hasn't any one to help him, or do any thing for him, even in the way of advice."

“Freddy Ross always loves to help you,” said Macy.

“So he does. I do wish he would happen along here this very minute. I think I should be tempted to tell him all about it.”

But the gray evening's shadows grew longer and longer, and neither Fred nor any other help came to the two orphans. George had learned by hard experience to trust his future, not perhaps like an older, wiser Christian, but with a kind of trust which may be equally well pleasing to God. “He has led us so far; he has been our Father, and he will be if we earnestly seek for the right. Help me, O thou unseen but ever near. Guide the poor fatherless boy; give him hope, faith, courage, and keep him ever—ever, let come what

may, in the straight and narrow way."

So prayed George as he sank, tired in body and mind, to his unquiet slumber; and who is there who does not feel sure the kind heavenly Father was listening to grant the request?

Macy had many troubled visions blending with her earliest dreams. Jessie and George seemed now in the dashing water below the falls, struggling to get out, while Helen Norton stood on the bank, and, instead of reaching a stick out to them, as *she* had to Fred Ross, laughed and whispered behind her hand to a crowd of little girls who stood off in the background. But soon both children sank to more resting sleep, waking not while the ministering

angel hovered softly around them, guarding the lonely house on the mill dam, until the sun was shining full and bright, and the garden had been watching for its little master a good full hour beyond the usual time.

CHAPTER V.

THE OLD GUN.

EARLY the next morning Helen Norton, who was never up until nearly time to go to school, was surprised in her bed by an early visit from Macy Barton.

Macy had come before the inhabitants of the village were stirring, hoping she could have a quiet talk with Helen without being seen to go to her house by any child in Sherburne; for Macy had a very honorable soul, and she liked not only to keep her promise in its letter, but in its very spirit. Helen waked with a start, and it was some time before Macy could make her comprehend

just what she had come for ; nor did she believe until she found, weeks after, that Helen was really in earnest, that she had deliberately chosen as she did.

Macy's object was, to obtain from Helen liberty to break the promise which she had made her.

Macy did not believe in using any of those maxims like "a bad promise is better broken than kept," as an excuse to cover up a deficiency in her own moral nature. She had learned now never to make a rash promise, and that was a great gain ; but took no refuge in any what the little folks call "get offs." She did not fancy them ; more than that, she thought them wrong. This morning she tried every inducement she could imagine to persuade Helen to just allow her

to say it was *not* Jessie Ross who told her, promising neither by word or look to give any clue as to whom it really was.

All in vain, however; Helen was not to be moved; indeed, it seemed to Macy as if the more earnest she became the more sullen and determined Helen was. Even when the tears would start, and she could hardly speak for her sobs, Helen only laughed, and called her "Cry baby."

There was evidently no hope to come for Jessie in that quarter, and bewildered by so much trouble, poor little Macy went crying home, hiding her face way back in her sunbonnet, and wishing she could only stop just long enough to go by Dr. Ross's without the trace of tears on her cheeks.

Hardly had this thought passed through her mind when she heard footsteps coming up behind very quickly. She knew at once whose they were as well as if she had turned to see, and was therefore not at all surprised when Fred Ross said :

“Good morning, Macy ! How happens it you are up in the village so early this morning?”

Macy colored, and drew her sun-bonnet down a little more closely over her face ; but as she did this without answering, Fred, surprised by her silence, put his head under the protecting bonnet and exclaimed :

“Well now what in the world does this mean ? Drops of dew on the rose-bud ! Say, Macy, what has gone wrong ?”

"Nothing," said Macy, in a broken voice, which sounded very much like a sob.

"Nothing! Macy Barton? You can't make a fool of me that way. I never saw you cry before in all my life. I began to think you were not a bit like other little girls, for they all, even our Jessie, seem to be perpetual fountains of tears. Open the jet ever so little and out it comes, water up as high as the famous fountain at Chatsworth for all that I know. But you, Macy, you! George has told me a hundred times that you had such a stout little heart you made him ashamed of himself. Come, now, I am going to be told all about it if I walk away down to the mill-dam, and lose my breakfast for the sake of hearing."

Macy tried to smile, but the tears came faster than the smiles, and the combat between them was not very conducive to a clear voice ; so, after one or two forlorn attempts to articulate something, she gave up, and took out her grief in an unrestrained cry, which did her good if it did not Fred.

Every half-grown boy would have felt as if he were in quite a dilemma ; and Fred had perhaps in his happy, hearty boyhood, rather more than the usual dread of tears. He tried to comfort, then to laugh at, and finally to be sorry for and very sympathetic with Macy, before she could control her emotion enough to give him a really intelligible answer :

“ Everything goes wrong,” she said, “ and everybody is in trouble.”

"Please except your humble servant," said Fred, venturing another peep under the sunbonnet.

"You! O yes, you are always happy," said Macy, more cheerfully.

"Excepting when I get flogged at school, when Henry throws me like a duck into the pond because I won't bring his ball, when I lose my pen-knife, tear my kite, always am out in a game, and get beaten six times in succession at marbles."

"O Fred," said Macy quite in her natural voice, "how can you talk so? These are very small trials indeed."

"Yes; they never make me cry very hard," and here followed another look under the bonnet. "Are yours as hard to be borne?"

"Just as much worse as can be,"

said Macy with much dignity. "I wouldn't cry any more than you would for such trifles."

"I know it, Macy. Now let us hear what is big enough to make this shower this beautiful summer morning."

"O how I wish I could tell you," said Macy, with such an eager look in the boy's face that Fred's cheeks turned very red.

"*Wish* you could? Of course you can. I should just like to know who is to hinder?" he asked.

"I can't tell him about Jessie," thought Macy quickly; "but George said he wished he knew about Mr. Swift." So, without waiting for any more reflection, she poured out the whole story of George's wrongs, the recital of which, with the many ex-

clamations and vows of vengeance with which she was interrupted, we will spare our reader. Suffice it to say, interest in George's story led them both away from the real object of Macy's walk, nor did they again remember it until they had separated. Fred begged leave to tell his father all about the trouble as soon as he should reach home; but this Macy stoutly refused. George had expressed a willingness for him to know, but had said nothing of any one else; and George was a boy, Fred well knew, who did not like to be interfered with. He even doubted whether there would be anything in the world which he would allow him to do to help him; but, and every moment as Fred came nearer home, the intention grew stronger

and stronger; he would not rest a moment until he saw George righted, and Rob blamed as he deserved.

Macy had great confidence in Fred's doing whatever he desired to; so her heart was very much lightened of one of its burdens as she came to the mill-dam.

She wanted to share the hope with the bright water, and indeed it seemed to light up with the sun's clear rays, as if any darkness or doubt, which had gathered over it with the twilight of the last evening, had disappeared as it had from her heart.

Macy was almost conscience-stricken when she found how happy she could feel even while Jessie, her dearest friend, was in trouble, and that so much on her account. But Jessie

had a friend all ready and able to help her who was only waiting for an opportunity to do so, as we shall find as our story progresses.

Susan Ross had been by no means an unconcerned spectator of the difficulties which had arisen on the afternoon of the surprise party, and, very much to her own regret, she had a slight wonder pass through her mind whether or no Jessie, in her excessive fondness for her young friend, could have been so foolish as to have told her. She had not asked Jessie, because she did not even like to suspect her of such a thing; nor had she mentioned it to her mother, for she knew her trust in what Jessie said was most entire; but she kept the thing silently in her mind, and was watchful over the child, as so many

good elder sisters are, when they, as Susan did, are desirous to fill the place of both mother and sister.

Fearing that the children would naturally suspect Jessie of the breach of promise, Susan had looked eagerly to see if the child brought home from school any unhappiness; but, as we have known, Jessie's own solution of the coldness of her school-mates elated her, and it was a very cheerful face indeed which she brought home that night. Still, not entirely satisfied, she went to call upon Miss Goddard, and the two made their plans for being watchful over Jessie, and not allowing her to suffer unjustly.

"I have not in my mind the least doubt," said Miss Goddard, "that Jessie is as clear from any blame in

this matter as I am. Still, as none of us are perfect, and as her temptations were very great, it will do no harm for us to proceed with all possible care. Perhaps the thing will be over in a day in school; such little excitements soon put themselves out. But I do not wish it to pass without making a salutary impression upon the other children, of the good which an established character for truth does a child. Jessie has many faults; but this of truth-telling is a capital offset to them. I trust her as implicitly as I do myself."

"So do father and mother," answered Susan. "If there is ever any slight family difference, any different way of stating the same thing, Jessie's *says so* is the deciding point, and my

parents say it shall be until they find her once untrue."

"Excellent!" said Miss Goddard. "That is precisely the motto upon which I govern my school. Believe in every child until they prove themselves unworthy of the trust. But how can your parents keep from making a distinction where one child's testimony must be often the turning point?"

"O I don't know; it seems to be an accepted thing with us all. Once I remember, when Jessie was very little, she and Fred had taken a rich China vase, which they were forbidden to touch, to play with while mother was out of the parlor. They were always punished for a disobedience, Jessie particularly, because it was so hard to make her mind; but

to-day they wanted the vase to ride in Fred's new wagon, because it was so handsome, and between them they broke it. Fred ran away and hid, but Jessie sat right down, playing with the bits of china, until mother came in ; then, when asked who broke it, she told the truth, said it was Fred and herself, took her whipping, and the next time she broke a thing, she told the truth as freely as she had this first ; showing that she clearly understood, young as she was, the difference between a punishment for disobedience and for telling the truth ; or, rather, that telling the truth did not bring the punishment, but the disobedience. She is a remarkable child in this one thing."

"And there is no fault more common among children, or harder to

break up. 'All go astray,' the Bible says, 'speaking lies;' and it is wonderful how many different ways of speaking lies children will find besides with their lips!"

"It is fearful to think of!" said Susan. "I know a good and a great man who once said: 'Teach your children to obey, and to speak the truth, and you have won them; every other good thing will follow in their train;' and sometimes I think these words are very true."

"I am sure they are, from my long experience with children," said Miss Goddard. "I never had pupils in my life, however stupid, but what, if I found them obedient and truthful, I had every hope some day to succeed in their education; on the contrary, I have had a few, and I am

glad to say only a very few, whose habit of falsifying was so fixed I often doubted whether it was not the unpardonable sin, and God in consequence had given them up to every manner and shade of wickedness. Falsehood is the most difficult of all habits to break; indeed, I doubt whether the stain upon the character ever can be removed. I once taught a little boy who seemed to me crushed for life by a single wrong story. Others forgot it in him, but he never seemed to regain his self-respect. I wonder often that parents who are careless in instilling the habit of truth, do not themselves shrink from the lasting injury, the *shame* which the falsehood leaves."

"I think," said Susan, "it is the *shame* which Jessie naturally shrinks

from. There is not a particle of cowardice in the child's heart, and I think it is almost instinctive, this fear she has that she shall disgrace herself even by a shade of coloring which is not true.

"Mother calls it God's love, showing itself in her child, and says often she feels so grateful to him that he has given to her, in Jessie, such a living lesson for the truth. No reasoning or punishment would have half the effect upon her other children which it has to see Jessie so universally truthful."

"And I feel the influence of her truth in my school," said Miss Goddard. "Sometimes I think the children are afraid to do what is wrong for fear I shall ask Jessie, and they know that she will tell me the whole,

just as it is. I am therefore the more curious to see what the effect will be upon the school of the suspicion which rests upon her now."

If Jessie had heard this conversation, what do you suppose she would have thought? Thus far in her life she had never been *praised* for telling the truth; why should she? She might as well have been praised for not stealing, or coveting, or quarreling, or many other things which she had been told never to do. She told the truth always because it was right, because she loved to, just as she loved to be happy, and to see others happy about her, as she loved to play with the flowers, or tell an interesting story.

I wish more children had the same love for truth; but if they have not,

will they try only for one week, when they feel disposed to say what is not so, to think of Jessie Ross? and how charming it would be to have every one say of her, as they did of Jessie: "Well, I believe it, for Jessie says so!" O it would be better than almost any other claim on people's affection or attention; and it would be a certain claim, for every one loves the child who always speaks the truth.

Fred Ross, without consulting his father, as he so earnestly desired, returned home after going within sight of the mill-dam with Macy, and climbed up into his study in the tree to think over George's troubles, and to see if he could do any wise thing to help him.

"Go carefully, Fred," was a motto

his father has always been instilling into his mind; and he had so far succeeded, that when Fred felt anything very important was to be done, he was apt to make his way into his leafy private room and think while he whittled or whistled, as it might happen. Now he took out his knife, and was so deeply engaged making a thread winder for Macy, that, had he not also been very much intent on immediately righting his friend, the chances are George would very soon have had to give way to the winder in his hand. As it was, every expedient for helping him seemed, on being carefully looked over, to have an insurmountable objection. It would not do to call Rob out and give him a "real boy's thrashing," however much he might deserve it; for that

would only vex his father, Mr. Towne, and, as his influence over Mr. Swift was great, put George into more trouble than he was now. He couldn't go right to Mr. Swift and tell him he was sure it was Rob, and not George, for where was a single proof he could bring but the simple one, "I know so." He couldn't tell Mr. Towne, for of course he was not going to believe him. What should he do. Fred became very restless thinking, thinking, up in his high seat, so he came down and, almost without knowing it, took his way over to Mr. Swift's farm.

He saw George at work in the field with a body of men, and as he stood at a distance watching him, he couldn't help wondering that he kept on in such an earnest, manly way.

He thought if he had been George he never, never would have put his foot near Mr. Swift's again. As he was perched up on the stile, longing, but knowing that he must not, for Mr. Swift allowed no visiting in his field when work was going on, to go a little nearer, he saw Rob stealing along under the fence near him with an old gun on his shoulder.

His first impulse was just to seem to have noticed him, but his second was to join and have a talk with him; so, calling out, "Rob Towne! hallo there!" he had the pleasure of seeing Rob dart down under the bushes as if he had shot him.

Laughing quietly to himself, he went softly up to the spot where Rob had disappeared and caught hold of the end of the gun, which

Rob had in vain tried to conceal with himself.

"Let this gun alone, can't you?" said Rob, in a whisper, "it's loaded and will go off at a touch."

Fred's hand moved higher up on the gun, and he pointed its muzzle in a direction opposite the spot where he stood, but held firmly as he said:

"Hallo! a boy behind it; why it looks out here as if some one had stuck a gun into the bushes and gone away and forgotten it. What sort of a spree is going on to-day, Rob Towne?"

"Hands off the gun, can't you?" still whispered Rob. "I tell you it is loaded, and if it should go off here father would hear, and he would know the bang of old Betsy anywhere."

"So your father don't know you're out? That's what I should call getting into a scrape," said Fred, speaking quite loud; "where does he think you are?"

"How you do scream," said Rob. "Get in here, if you won't go along about your own business, and I will tell you."

Fred crawled into the bush, and though he felt so much disposed to kick Rob over, as he fairly came in contact with him, that his boot almost took that direction of itself, he sat down by him, only knocking the gun out of his hand as he did so.

"I tell you it's loaded," growled Rob.

"So you have told me twice before," said Fred, "but I am not a girl,

to be frightened by a loaded gun. Let it go off if it has a fancy for it; I have seen a gun fired once before in my life, I guess."

"I wish you would be clever," said Rob, looking at him with a loving smile; "I should like above all things to have you go with me after the gray squirrels down in Bent's Woods. They say they are so thick there you can almost knock them down with the butt end of your gun."

"It's the only way you'll ever shoot one, I am sure of that," and Fred's voice had a tinge of contempt which Rob didn't fancy.

"I am as good a shot, father says, as any boy in Sherburne; and if I don't bring home a string of squirrels as long as my arm, my name is not Rob Towne."

“What will you do with them?”

“O we fellows are going to have a roast.”

“Who are we fellows?”

“Bill M’Arthary, Jack Cartridge, Tim Steele, and a lot of us.”

“Boon companions I should think; but what does your father say to all this?”

“You don’t suppose I am fool enough to tell him.”

“No, I am sure I don’t; he doesn’t know you are here to-day, I’ll bet a sixpence.”

“Not he; he thinks,” and Rob’s face expressed so many wicked things that I am sure if any of my young readers had seen it they never would have forgotten it, “that I am sick at home with the headache.”

“Did you tell him so?”

“Of course I did, and I laid in bed until he was fairly off. When he came up to see me I groaned, O so dreadfully!” and Rob almost choked himself with his suppressed laughter, “that the old man was scared to within an inch of his life, and went off for a bottle of rhubarb, which he always keeps ready to dose me with if I am sick.”

“I hope he gave you a tumbler full,” said Fred, earnestly.

“Not a drop hardly passed my lips; you don’t think I was fool enough for that. I have played possum too often for that I assure you.”

“What did you do?”

“Asked him to put it down and get me a little candy to take the taste out of my mouth; so the old fellow,” and here Rob laughed again,

“put it down, and went over to Mr. Smith’s store for an ounce of peppermints. When he was gone, I jumped out of bed as softly as a cat, took one mouthful, a dreadful little one, to make my mouth smell of it, and then tossed the rest out of the window as far as I could throw it.”

“Then you ate the peppermints, I suppose?”

“La, yes! and they took the taste out very soon; but you see the governor, he smelt my breath, as if after all he kind of suspected me, and then, when he found it was all right, he looked mighty pleased. I don’t know but he would have given me a shilling for being so good and dutiful, if I had only thought to ask him just in the nick of time. O I rolled over and over on the bed, and I tell you,

if I weren't in terrible pain then no fellow ever was."

"And then what?" asked Fred.

"O then I waited until he was gone, when I crept down stairs and told mother father had given me a great dose of rhubarb, and I felt so much better that if she wouldn't say nothing about it I would go out in the air a little while, and she said she wouldn't. She don't like to have me work a bit better than I like myself, so it's all right in that quarter; only I declare it's funny how many ways you have to turn to cheat the old ones. Mother is as afraid of a gun as father is of having me lazy, so I had to sneak back again up stairs and get this gun, as softly as if my feet were turned into velvet. But it's glorious fun when you get clear. Sometimes

I think I like it better than I should if there were no breakers."

"Now if your father catches you, what?" asked Fred, abruptly.

"You won't turn tell-tale?" said Rob, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Never you put that name along with mine even in the form of a question," said Fred, warmly, but with a flash of the eye which, considering their close quarters, Rob did not exactly fancy.

"I aint afraid of you, not I," said Rob, "you're always as tight as a vice; all the fellows trust you; but you just crawl out now, and let me come, 'cause it's half a mile to the woods, and I must be home and abed by the time the clock strikes twelve; father always comes then to his dinner."

“One thing before we go,” said Fred ;
“ I meant to have said it to you when
I first saw you, but you haven’t given
me a chance. I think Rob Towne, you
are the meanest, wickedest, most lying
boy in America, and that, if there
was another such a one in the coun-
try God would burn it, or swallow it
up as he did Sodom and Gomorrah.
Now I tell you what, you are always
doing just such cheating things as
this to-day ; why your whole life is
only one big lie, Rob Towne ! You
opened that gate and let the cattle
into Mr. Swift’s corn-field, and you
are dastardly enough to lay the
blame on as upright a fellow as ever
lived. You know, too, that if he
loses his place there he will lose his
character, and that there is nothing
but his own two hands to buy a

mouthful of food or an article of clothing for Macy and himself, and all this you did to gratify a mean spite, or to get time to go off serving your master, I don't know which. One thing, however, you may set down as certain; George Barton is as honorable as the—as the—why as the angels, and he would not say you did it to save himself, neither would I to save myself; but I tell you what, and you just set me down one, I'll move heaven and earth but I'll prove to Mr. Swift that George Barton is innocent and that Rob Towne is the scamp. Now, sir! (and in his indignation Fred had risen, and was busy kicking open the clump of bushes,) “you may take your choice; you may march up to Mr. Swift and confess, or sooner or later I

will drag you up, and you shall do it."

Rob was the taller and stouter boy of the two, but it is astonishing how little true courage has to do with bones and sinews, and how much with a pure, good heart. Rob absolutely trembled now when he heard this unexpected address, and looked around uneasily, to see if there was no way out of the bushes by which he could beat a speedy retreat; but, as if Fred conjectured what he was about to do, he laid his hand upon the gun, and held it fast.

"No; no sneaking," he said; "I'll fire this gun off this instant, and call your father right to the spot, if you don't own up to me that you opened the gate."

Fred had wrested the gun so nearly

out of Rob's hand that his own finger was upon the trigger, and Rob saw his advantage.

"Let it alone and I'll tell you," he said gruffly.

"No, I shall fire if you don't answer by the time I count ten."

"Answer what?"

"Why, whether you did not leave the gate at Mr. Swift's open. One, two, three, four, five!"

"Well, suppose I did," said Rob, who during the counting had been making as violent efforts as he dared to gain possession of the gun.

"Then say so," said Fred, pausing an instant.

Rob looked very angry, but did not speak. "Six, seven, eight," counted on Fred.

"Stop, can't you," said Rob.

What difference does it make to you, I should just like to know?"

"That isn't the point under debate. Did you or did you not? Nine!"

"Won't you tell?" asked Rob, holding out his hand with a supplicating motion.

"Tell! yes, of course I will; that is what I want to know for. Come, now, own up; I shall fire as true as your name is Rob Towne when I have counted one more."

"I haven't another shot until I see Tim," growled Rob.

"Speak! are you going to or not?"

Rob fixed his eye steadily upon Fred's face for an instant, and Fred met the look by one of such fixed purpose that Rob said hastily,

“Don’t hurry a fellow ; give me time to think.”

“Think away, then, but make haste ; I can’t be dilly-dallied with. Now, for George’s sake, I will count ten again, but it’s the last time.”

Rob thought he had the game in his own hands, and began to grow easier.

“Suppose I said I did, what would you do, Fred Ross ?”

“Do ? go right up to Mr. Swift’s as fast as my feet could carry me and tell him what you said.”

“Then he would turn me off his farm.”

“Better you than a boy who is innocent.”

“I didn’t mean much harm. I had no idea so few cattle could eat so fast.”

"Then you let them in."

"O I won't tell you, Fred! so that is all about it. It's none of your business, and you may just let it alone, and my gun too."

In his interest in Bob's half admission Fred had loosened his hold on the gun, and Rob thought by the sudden twist he gave that he should gain possession of it; but he was mistaken; Fred held tight on, and indeed recovered firmer hold, but lost his temper.

"Now," said he, ominously pointing the gun in the direction of the field where Mr. Towne was; "now, sir, you'll have to walk up Spanish, I can tell you. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine Quick!"

"Hold on! I'll tell you."

“Speak then, or—”

“Well, wait a minute, can’t you?”

“Ten!” and away blazed the gun, much more noisily than if it had been pointed at a whole tribe of gray squirrels.*

Rob dropped it in his astonishment, and started at once for home; but Fred sat down coolly by it, and waited to see what would happen next.

Mr. Towne, as Rob had predicted, no sooner heard the report of the gun than he recognized the sound of old Betsy, and throwing down his hoe, hurried to the spot from whence the sound had proceeded. It must be said that, notwithstanding the “tumbler of rhubarb,” his suspicions were instantly aroused as to the

* See Frontispiece.

truth of Rob's indisposition. O how dreadful it is when we have so little confidence in a child that every event gives rise to the worst suspicions! When Mr. Towne came to the bushes he found, to his surprise, old Betsy lying on the ground, and Fred Ross sitting beside it.

"Why, Frederic Ross," he said, and it must be owned there was much pleasure in his tones, "is it you? How came you by old Betsy?"

"It's I," said Fred; "but Rob had the gun. There he is, running over the field as fast as he can go, to get home and in bed by the time you get there, I suppose."

"Who fired the gun?"

"I did. I told him I would unless he owned up about opening the gate at Mr. Swift's. He said you would

be here in a minute if I did ; but for all he would not tell, I know he did ; I am as certain of it as he is, or you are, Mr. Towne ; and I think it's a sin and a shame for you both that the whole blame comes on a poor innocent boy like George."

"If you weren't Dr. Ross's son," said the farmer, looking at him from head to foot, "I would soon teach you better manners. Who says Rob did it?"

"I say so," said Fred, firmly ; "and I say, too, that there isn't another boy who tells so many shameless stories in all Sherburne. You had better ask him when you go home what became of your rhubarb this morning, and how many gray squirrels he expected to shoot with Jack Cartridge and Jim Steele while you thought he was

at home, groaning with the headache."

Fred had no sooner said these words than he became very sorry for them. He was, in truth, vexed to think he had come so near a full confession from Rob and had failed. He wanted to wreak his dissatisfaction on some one, and, childlike, took the first opportunity; but when he saw the expression of pain which came over Mr. Towne's face he became instantly grieved himself at what he had done.

"Poor Robert!" said Mr. Towne, and his voice trembled as he did so; "if his own mother had lived this would never have happened."

"Isn't this mother his own?" asked Fred, while his thoughts flew in an instant to the grieved look he had

seen upon his mother's face when he had done wrong.

"No. His mother was so good, so careful ! she loved him, and he loved her so dearly, that when he was a little boy I never thought he could do wrong for her sake."

"I am sorry for him," said Fred simply. "I don't know but I should be a very wicked boy, and tell falsehoods as Rob does, if my mother should die."

Mr. Towne took up the gun without saying another word, and was going away, when Fred called after him :

"Mr. Towne, if you please, sir, you will see that Mr. Swift does not turn George away for doing what he did not do."

"Mind your own business," said

Mr. Towne gruffly, looking back over his shoulder at Fred, "and don't be meddling in what don't concern you."

"But I must meddle," persisted Fred. However, Mr. Towne had no further notice to take of him, and went back to his work.

Fred loitered around, hoping something more would happen, what he hardly knew. But at last he heard the clock strike nine, and, at the risk of being very late at school, hurried away. Whether he was an attentive scholar, and did his duty faithfully with his books, Mr. Dean, his teacher, fortunately was not called upon to say. Certainly he was a preoccupied boy, that is, a boy with his mind upon some subject which did not belong to the school-room, and which sent him, as soon as school was fairly

over and his home errands attended to, down to the mill-dam, to talk with Macy, and wait impatiently for George to return from his long day's work.

CHAPTER VI.

DAWN FOR HELEN.

As the children were sitting together they were joined by Jessie, and soon after by Helen Norton. This latter addition to their company was not very cordially received. Macy had her morning's visit fresh in her mind, and Jessie longed, though she did not dare, for fear of interrupting her surprise party, to repeat to Macy the many little acts of coldness, and almost unkindness, which had made her day unpleasant to her at school.

Helen Norton had come to rid herself of an uneasy, unpleasant feeling, which had clung to her, do what

she would, all the day long. She longed to see Macy, and know that, after all, she did not think it was of much importance whether or not Jessie was wrongfully suspected.

In truth, though Helen was so disobedient to her mother, and had no sacred regard for the truth, yet she was not at heart an unkind child, and she did not like to see any one made very unhappy through her means. All day in school she had noticed that both Macy and Jessie were more sober than usual, and her conscience told her she knew the reason why.

As they were talking together as all children do, they heard George's voice singing loud and cheerfully the following song, which we give our readers:

“Yes, courage, boy, courage, and press on thy way;
There is nothing to harm thee, nothing to fear;
Do all which Truth bids thee, and do it to-day;
Hold on to thy purpose, do right, persevere.

“Though waves of temptation in anger may roll,
And storm-cloud on storm-cloud hang dark in
thy sky,
Still courage, boy, courage! there is strength in
thy soul;
Believing and doing bring help from on high.

“When breakers are round thee, ’mid wreck and
mid roar,
Eye closer thy compass, be fervent in prayer.
The Saviour Almighty can help thee ashore,
And songs of salvation be sung by thee there.

“Let joy light thy cheek, then, and hope gild thy
brow;
Ne’er parley with wrong, nor ill stay to borrow.
Let thy object be Truth, thy watchword be Now
Make sure of to-day—trust God for to-morrow.

“By deeds of the mighty who struggled and bled,
Be incited to action and manfully fight.
Good is worth doing, boy! and, living or dead,
That good shall reward thee with honor and
might.

"Then courage, boy, courage! there's light in thy sky;

Be humble, be active, be honest, be true;
And though hosts may confront, and hell lifts its cry,

'I've conquered!' at last shall be shouted by you."

Fred joined heartily in the chorus as George came in sight, and even the little girls could not resist the inspiring words:

"Then courage, boy, courage! and press on thy way."

George laughed heartily when he found what a musical spirit his song had awakened, and the laugh did him quite as much good as the song. Indeed, there was nothing which just at that time could have had as beneficial an effect as both together, and it was with a lighter heart than he had known for several days that he

threw himself down on the grass, still continuing the refrain :

“Then courage, boy, courage! there’s strength in
thy soul;

Believing and doing bring help from on high.”

Never was a presence less wished for than that of Helen Norton’s to-night. What should they do with her? each child asked as the soft evening light stole up over the old woods and settled itself down on the water, on the broken mill-wheel, even on the dropping timbers of the mill itself, giving every thing a weird, half frightful look, as if in the perishing building were plenty of unpleasant things to hide themselves if they wished.

Helen kept her eyes turned often in that direction; she wondered Macy,

when she was left so much alone, was not afraid. She remembered the stories which she had read of ghosts and witches, and finally worked her feelings up to such a state of alarm, that, though she was very desirous of going home, and the more and more so as it grew darker, still she had not the courage to move an inch away from the other children, and sat silent, wondering how she could coax Fred and Jessie to go round with her in the direction of her mother's house.

If Helen had been a good little girl, there were two troubles she would have been saved now. One was the foolish fear of ghosts and witches. If she had never read the books which tell of such things, and no child should, how very little she would have known about such false

things; and then, even if she had, she would have felt sure that if she loved God, and tried to be a good child, he could and would have taken as good care of her here as if she were safe under her mother's eye at home. And then again, if she had done by Jessie Ross as she would that Jessie should have done by her, she would have had no reluctant feeling now in asking the Ross children to go at least part of the way home with her.

Did any of my young readers ever think how very kind God is to us in placing all these obstacles in the path of our ill-doing? He seems to arrange everything so that when we feel as if we wished an object very, very much, if we have been doing wrong this sin shall come between us and our object, and entirely

prevent it. So he says to us, "Do right if you would be happy; be pure and good if you would succeed."

Fred grew very impatient as he found Helen had no idea of going. There was not a girl in Sherburne that he disliked so much, and he would as soon have thought of proclaiming his adventures with Mr. Towne and Rob from the church steeple as of telling them before her. So, after waiting what he thought was a sufficient time to allow her to go home, if she had any intention of so doing, he whispered to George that he had something very important to tell him, and away they went out of sight behind the large beech trees.

George's astonishment at Fred's

communication may easily be conceived. He had heard the gun fired, and noticed Mr. Towne leave the field ; but supposing it was nothing but one of Rob's tricks, had paid no more attention to it. He could not help a feeling of wishing to take care of his own difficulties, even without his friend's aid, but wisely kept that to himself ; nor did he tell Fred that he felt very certain all he had done in his behalf would only work out more mischief in the end. The boys made many plans for the clearing away of all clouds in the end, but none so light that the sun could pierce through them yet ; and when Jessie called to say that it was growing quite dark, and they should be on their way home, Fred felt as if, in his own words, he " had been ham-

mering all day without so much as hitting the nail on the head once."

Helen Norton was waiting, now as the dusk grew thicker and thicker, in too much terror to go alone. All at once she happened to think of a resort which she felt quite sure would bring relief. "I will tell Jessie Ross," she thought, "that if she will go round Dean's corner, past the patch of woods with me, I will tell her something which she would give lots to know; and I will tell her right before Macy Barton, then Macy will know what I mean, and will help me; she will persuade her to go, I know she will."

But it seemed as if even this was not to be allowed Macy for comfort to-night, for Helen's timidity was well known to the school girls, and

Jessie, seeing how dark it had grown, did not wait to be asked, but offered to go past the corner of her own accord.

Fred was too much of a gentleman, boy as he was, to let the little girls go alone ; so, although he disliked Helen very heartily, he joined them before they were out of sight of the mill-dam, and forgetting very soon, as all children will, what was unpleasant, the three walked on as happily as if they were the best friends in the world. Nor did they leave Helen at the corner, as Jessie at first proposed. They went home with her, Fred opening and shutting her mother's gate behind her before he felt at perfect liberty to say "good-by."

Helen, for a wonder, felt this kind-

ness. The heart of this hard, naughty child God seemed to open in the only accessible spot to this undeserved kindness, and before Helen closed her eyes to sleep that night there came into her mind indistinct remembrances of words her Sabbath-school teacher had spoken to her, of texts of Scripture which she had only half learned at the time and never thought of since, among which was this one: "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

The first clause she repeated over and over again, wondering as she did so whether it could mean that if she wanted Jessie and Macy to love her she must love them, and must show them that she did. Now Helen, bad

as she was, had not the faculty which so many better children have, of thinking a few minutes over anything which arrests their attention of a serious nature, and then putting it away for something more agreeable ; she lay awake a much longer time than usual, and asked herself frequently if it could possibly mean that she should not prove herself friendly to those playmates unless she told them what she knew about the surprise party. Helen did not answer this question to-night, but as she went to sleep with it in her mind, so it was the first thing which occurred to her when she opened her eyes on the following morning ; and there came too, with a faint longing in the child's heart, (for she was an only child, and her mother

a widow,) a wish to know whom the friend could be that sticketh closer than a brother. Fred Ross seemed to love Jessie so dearly, and Jessie Fred, if she only had such a brother she shouldn't be half so lonely or ill-natured as she was now. Her mother would have some one else to find fault with besides herself, and that at least would be a relief.

Helen determined to watch her opportunity, and if she could find a chance without telling who told Macy Barton of the surprise party, to try and unsay some of the many things which she said to induce the girls to lay the blame upon Jessie Ross. And this faint glimmering of a desire to do right, to be better, was the immediate result of kindness on Jessie's

part. Let my young readers all remember this when they are tempted to do an unkind thing, or rather when they are tempted not to do a kind one.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FLOWER FAIRY.

It was very difficult now for a high-spirited boy like George Barton to go through the many changes which came into his every-day life. It was hard enough for him, with a desire for an education, and a feeling that he could do something if he could command it, to work on all day with his hands. Faithful and industrious as he was, there were many hours when every movement of his hoe became a matter of special effort. "If I only had not been an orphan," he thought over and over again, "I should have been fitting now with Fred Ross for college, instead of

working shoulder to shoulder with such a boy as Rob Towne." But then Mr. Swift was, as we have before said, uniformly kind and good to him, and when he became disheartened he had only to think of the little home all their own by the side of the mill-dam, and Macy, with her sweet child's ways and great love for him, to feel quite brave and strong again.

Now, however, everything seemed changed. Mr. Swift, instead of the cordial good morning and the kind word with which he had always before greeted him, turned his head away whenever he saw him approaching, and if he had any orders to give gave them through a third person. Mr. Towne was not unkind to him; indeed, George sometimes thought he was much more careful of him than

before the affair of the corn-field ; but he avoided him, gave him his work in some remote place when he could, and seldom spoke unnecessarily to him.

With the other workmen he had never been at all familiar. They thought him a proud, unsocial boy, yet for all that they could not help liking him, and felt sorry for him now he seemed low-spirited and in disgrace. Many kind words were spoken by lips which had never opened to him before, and yet they could do very little toward doing away with the sense of continual discomfort under which George labored.

Weeks had passed by since the gate was opened, and things seemed to George to grow worse and worse. He was looking forward with abso-

lute longing to the time when his summer engagement with Mr. Swift would be over, when the whole course of affairs was altered by an unexpected event. But we must go back, before we relate it to our young readers, to say how Jessie Ross fared, when the absence of the surprise party made her sure that was not the occasion of the change in her play-mates at school.

Like all excitements among children, this had worn itself away without after the first day appearing in a form that made it proper for Miss Goddard to make any active movement toward breaking it up. She had discovered from close watching that Helen Norton, in some way, lay at the bottom of the whole affair, and telling this to Susan Ross, had left to

her the business of finding out what it was.

All the children in Sherburne loved Susan, and Miss Goddard thought the less said about the difficulty in school the sooner it would be likely to be removed; and she was anxious that it should be done in such a manner as to clear every suspicion from Jessie, and to show to the other children the great value of a character for truth.

Susan tried for several days to meet Helen in the streets; for she disliked Mrs. Norton, and never went to her house without she was sent there by her mother. But in vain. If Helen saw her coming, she was sure to dart round a corner, or run away in the opposite direction as fast as her feet could carry her.

One evening, therefore, having a choice bunch of flowers, of which Helen was very fond—and this was strange, for such children are not the ones who generally love anything so simple and beautiful as flowers—she went to her mother's house, and caught the child as she was scampering away to hide herself in the old hay-loft. Since Helen's conscience had become a little troubled, and she began to feel that she wanted some one to love her, and must do something herself in order to make them love her, she had avoided Macy, Jessie, and indeed all of the Ross family.

“Stop, Helen,” said Susan; “come and see what I have brought for you. I remember Jessie always used to ask when our carnations were in



Susan gives Helen some Flowers.

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bloom, whether she might not bring you one, so I have brought two perfect beauties."

Helen stopped and looked over her shoulder at Susan, but without turning. "Come," said Susan, sitting down on an old log by the wayside, "here are some pansies too; I never saw anything so curious as one of them is; it seems as if every leaf was royal purple, with streaks of yellow, like the purest gold."

Helen turned partly around, but did not move. "And here," continued Susan, "is a blue tassel flower. It is as delicate in color as the harebell, only the little leaves are so tiny they look almost as if good fairies might live in them. I should think a red flower shaped so would be beautiful."

"I have seen one, only it hadn't quite so many leaves," said Helen, stepping forward slowly, and gazing with longing eyes at the flowers.

"Did you? where?" asked Susan, holding out the boquet.

"At John Sheldon's; I peeped over the fence once, and there they were, a whole parcel of them, but I don't think they were half so pretty as this blue. Does it smell good?"

"Try it and see," and Helen's hand closed over the pretty boquet with a very eager grasp.

For some time the two sat looking at its beauties, then Susan asked:

"Why don't you have a flower-garden of your own, Helen? Your mother's front yard would be the prettiest spot in the world for one."

"Mother don't love flowers," said

Helen; "she says they would plague the life out of her."

"But you are old enough now to take care of them, and do for them, just as your mother does for you."

"She doesn't water me, nor pull up any weeds."

Susan smiled; she thought the weeds at least had been allowed pretty free growth; then she said: "But she clothes and feeds you, which is the same thing as watering plants. The water clothes the flowers with leaves and buds, and makes them take firm hold of the earth from which they draw their food."

"I never thought of that," said Helen.

"O there are a great many things about flowers of which you have never thought; and now if you

will run in and ask your mother's leave, while I am stopping to rest, we will go into the front yard and see if we can't find just the spot for the flower-garden."

Helen started for the house, but came directly back.

"Mother always says no to everything I ask her. I wish you would come with me, and ask her yourself."

Susan hesitated a moment. It seemed hardly proper, but there was something too pleading in the child's face to be resisted, and so she went in with her.

Mrs. Norton was glad to see her. Susan belonged to those whom she called the "quality folk;" Mrs. Norton did not, and she was vain enough to suppose it would make her a great deal more respected if she only knew

them. So now she received Susan with pleasant words, and was glad to do anything she asked, even to granting the flower-garden which she had so often refused her little daughter.

Susan went with Helen into the yard, and as she understood the business very thoroughly, from her long practice in their neat garden at home, Helen soon had the pleasure of seeing the border all staked out and ready for the spade.

While this was going on she talked as busily as any happy child. Indeed, Helen forgot all about how naughty she was sometimes, and had a kind of wonder if Miss Susan Ross might not be "the friend who sticketh closer than a brother."

As they were busy working Susan said: "Helen, I heard Jessie telling

what I thought was a very pretty story this morning to her little sister Luly while we were out weeding the garden together, and if you would like to hear it I should like to tell you too."

"I should," said Helen, turning up the ground at the same time with a broad shingle.

"Well, then, I am sorry it was about a fairy, for you and I know very well that there never was and never will be any such beings in this world. I sometimes think when children talk so much about them, they only mean that thing within them which approves what is right, by the good fairy; and that which makes them do wrong, by the wicked one; at least I feel pretty sure this is what Jessie means, for if you ask her,

‘Jessie, do you believe in fairies?’ she laughs and says, ‘No, indeed; but they are good to make stories about.’

“So now for the story; I shall make it a great deal shorter than Jessie did, but you will get the whole of it if I do.

“Once upon a time there lived a little girl who wasn’t very good; nobody loved her. Her mother used to say when she saw her coming into her room, ‘Go away, Louise, you are always in mischief; don’t come near my nice things. Go back to your nurse.’ And when she went back to her nurse, the nurse would say: ‘There comes that child again; she is the plague of my life. I had rather take care of the whole other ten than of her.’

“Then her friend Maria always said: ‘Dear me how I wish you were good and kind like other children, for you have such beautiful blue eyes, and great long curls, that I should love to look at you dearly if you were not cross and struck me so often.’

“One day Louise could not get any one to play with her, because she had told something wrong about this young friend—had said she had done something which, in truth, she had not. So she went out into her father’s garden to play by herself, and as she liked the flower beds best, she went in among them, and sat down by a great yellow lily.

“Pretty soon she saw a little head. O it was so pretty, no one ever saw

such a pretty one before, peeping up from among the broad leaves. At first she thought it was a humming bird; but soon up came an arm, then a foot, and before she had time to say a word the cunning little creature was dancing around upon the top of the leaves.

“When she came to the side nearest Louise she stopped, and beckoned her with her tiny hand to come up to her. Louise was not at all afraid of her, she was so small and so pretty; and when she was close by her side she said, in a voice not much louder than that in which the busy bee sings his song:

“‘Little girl, do you want to know what kind of little children we people who live in the flowers love?’

“‘Yes, if you please,’ said Louise very politely.

“‘We love those children whose hearts are white and pure, like our own white rose, and to such children we come, and grow, and put out our green leaves and our sweet buds. But to those whose hearts are all stained with sin, who are red, and blue, and black with a great many naughty things, we never stay even if we are sent. Our roots dry up, our heads droop, our leaves wither, our buds fall off, and pretty soon we shed all our tears. No dew refreshes us, no sun brightens us; we must die, and they pull up the blighted root and throw us away.’

“Jessie thought a child’s flower-garden must tell, therefore, how good and pure the child was; and it

occurred to me, as you were about beginning yours, how charming it would be if all the flowers took root and loved to live because their mistress was like the children of whom Jessie's little fairy talked."

Helen hung her head; she felt that if the flowers only took root in the gardens of good children her chance was very small indeed.

Susan promised that Fred or Henry should come around after tea and prepare the ground for Helen; and with the hope that other good and beautiful seeds besides the flower seeds might take root there, she walked slowly away. Hardly was she out of sight of the house when she heard a child's feet running very fast behind her. Turning to see who it was, she found Helen out of

breath, and very red in the face, puffing up to her.

"If I say I am sorry for that, don't you think it would do as well?" she asked, catching her breath between every word.

"For what, Helen? Sit down; you have run like a deer. See how hard it makes you breathe."

"For that story," said Helen, without taking any notice of the stone upon which Susan was trying to make her sit down.

"Certainly, if there is a wrong story told, it will be only right to say you are sorry."

"But it won't do as well."

"As well as what?"

"As well as telling all about it, it is so long now. I shouldn't quite—I mean perhaps it would be the same."

"I can't help you, Helen, until you tell me all about it. You see you are talking to me of what I don't understand."

Helen looked at her curiously, but she found no other expression than one of sorrow on her face; so she said abruptly :

"I wish you were my sister."

"Well, let me be your sister; you can talk to me just as freely as if I really was. We will play so, as the girls do in school."

Helen shook her head doubtfully. "I don't want to play. I want to have it in real earnest."

"Could you tell me better, do you think, if I were?"

"O a hundred times easier. Jessie always tells you every thing; she says she does."

"Well, Helen," said Susan, after looking for some time at her, until the eager expression was lost in a very stolid one, "I must go home now. If at any time soon you feel as if you wanted me to be your sister you can come and see me."

"But the flowers, will they grow?"

Susan hesitated, and then said: "You will feel more sure of God's smiling on every thing you do if you, from the very outset, behave in a way that he will approve. Did you ever think how right it was to ask God to bless and prosper you even in making a little flower-garden? When he directed you to commit your ways unto him and he would establish your path, he meant in just such things as these. Making this flower-garden is one of your ways, and you

could go, if you were a good little girl and loved to pray, and ask him to smile upon it, and make every little seed take root and live, as naturally as you can ask him now to make you a good girl."

Helen looked much puzzled, and at length said: "I never say my prayers any way. I don't think much about such stuff. I see lots of things that go about as well for mother, and she don't ever pray either, as for old Mrs. Barney, who, mother says, is all the time praying and reading her Bible when she had better be washing and ironing, or turning a penny some way."

Susan saw that this manner of talking was only a method Helen was taking to quiet her own conscience; and knowing full well that the best way of meeting such objections was

to take no notice of them at all, she started once more for home, as if she had not heard them.

Helen was disappointed. She had been used to hear her mother talk in that way when urged closely to prayer, or any religious duty, and she thought, in as far as she thought at all, that it would do as well to say she never prayed as to try and be good. The only point which troubled her was, whether if she was not pretty well behaved, if she had such a thing upon her conscience as the falsehood she told about Jessie Ross, God would let the flowers grow. She almost feared that there were some flower fairies who were not pleased with such little girls, and who would go and live with children like Macy Barton rather than with her.

Her thoughts moved very quickly as she saw Susan going away without taking any more notice of her. It seemed as if Macy's face, and Jessie's, with Kitty Cole's, and even Lucy Ray's, all came before her, so she called out:

"I told Macy Barton Jessie did not." The confession came so abruptly that she seemed hardly conscious what she was saying until it was all out. She then looked and felt very much frightened, so Susan wisely said:

"You are very sorry for all poor little Jessie has suffered because you did so, are you not?"

"Yes; I don't like to see her go moping about. She hasn't told the children a story since, though they ask her now every day. I wish she

would ; I tried to tease her myself, but I couldn't speak to her easy like, as I used to."

"And you will try and never do such a thing again I am sure?"

Helen swung herself from side to side without answering. She had confessed, but for promising for the future that was a very different affair. She did not like to make the entire confession which this would imply. It is easy for most children to promise to do anything which is not required of them just at the moment, but with Helen it was quite different ; she had a feeling, and it was the only noble thing the child had, that what she promised she must do ; the difficulty was to induce her to make the promise. Now she would rather never have had a flower-gar-

den than have bound herself to a strict line of future conduct ; so, after sitting silent for what seemed to Susan a long time, she said :

“ I don't know ; if I've told you that's enough ; I may want to—”

“ To what ?” asked Susan, interrupting her. “ You don't mean to say that you can plan to say what is not true ?”

Helen made no answer again, so Susan simply said, “ What use shall I make of what you have told me about Jessie ?”

“ If you tell of me the girls will hate me. They call me liar half the time now, and I won't stand any more such talk. I'll just run away, if everybody can't love me no more than they do now. Miss Goddard hates me.”

"Hush, Helen!" said Susan, drawing the flushed and excited child down by her, "you mustn't talk so, it's very wrong. Everybody will love you if you are good, but people can't love bad children."

"I aint always bad; I give them half my cake, and my candy too, when mother gives it to me. I don't pinch them half as much as I used to; and when Kitty Dane struck me right in my eye, I didn't strike her, nor tell Miss Goddard of her either."

"That was a good little girl," said Susan, putting her hand through the great mass of tangled black hair which lay like a mop all over Helen's head.

"Nobody ever calls me good; nobody ever knows nothing but what

is bad. Mother is always scolding, scolding; and Miss Goddard never smiles when I come as she does to the other children; and when I get a perfect lesson, it don't give her no pleasure to put me down ten."

The sense of injustice is not seldom the keenest punishment which comes to naughty children. They know, and are acutely sensitive to the exertion which they must make to do anything which is really correct; and when they do, it wounds and grieves them not to have it as quickly seen and acknowledged as it is in those who seldom do wrong. They don't realize that it is with their character as with their associates'; people judge the whole by the prominent taste. It is no truer that "birds of a feather flock together,"

than that where most of the actions seem incorrect, where a child's word can't be believed, where they take things which do not belong to them, or are unkind, cruel, or profane, to suppose that this one indulged sin colors every part of the character, as the association of friends colors our habits and dispositions.

Helen nestled a little nearer to Susan. Never before in her whole life had she spoken of herself as she had now, though she had thought it over a great deal as she sat alone, hour after hour, in her mother's house; there was something so new in it, that the frightened feeling which she had had when she had first spoken the truth with regard to Jessie came partly back.

"You are mistaken," Susan said

very kindly, "and I will tell you what I will do now. I will go to Miss Goddard, and say that in some way very sure, which she must not ask me, I have been able to ascertain that Jessie is entirely innocent of the charge of having told Macy Barton about the surprise party, and that her young friends may love and trust her as well as ever now."

"Yes, you may," said Helen.

"You see that is not saying one word about you, and no one need know that you were the child who told Macy."

"No," said Helen.

"Then Jessie will be righted, you will never tell a falsehood about a dear innocent child again, and you will start from this very moment, when we are sitting on this stone

alone, out here by the stile, to be a better little girl, so good and true that people shall say of you as they always have of Jessie, 'I know it must be true, for she says so.' "

"I don't know," said Helen; "it's hard work to tell the truth. Mother would whip me a great many times more than she does now if I always did. I hide lots of things from her always."

"If I were you I never would again. You just try these few days, while the boys are making the garden, and you are putting the seeds in, to see if every thing don't go better for telling of it exactly as it is. Will you?"

"I'll try to-day," said Helen deliberately.

"That is a good little girl," and

Susan kissed the plump brown cheek which was close to hers.

The color came again in Helen's face. Over neck and arms, down through her very finger tips, the quick blood tingled as it had never done before in her life. "I wish she was my true sister." Such were the words in which the feeling clothed itself; and when Susan once more started for home, it was with difficulty Helen restrained the longing cry which her heart sent out after her.

Susan felt as if a great end had been accomplished, and so did Miss Goddard, who, although she knew the source from which the truth had come, took especial pains not to ask a question which would involve Helen. It was, however, with much pleasure

that she said that afternoon, just as she was closing school:

"Children, I have noticed for some time that there has been among you a hard feeling with regard to Jessie Ross. Was it because you thought she told Macy Barton about the surprise party?"

"Yes, yes, yes," said a dozen voices in a breath.

Jessie looked utterly confounded. She had *said* she had not, and to have her word doubted was a new experience to her.

"Answer me candidly now," and Miss Goddard's voice did not imply a doubt as to the answer she should receive, have any of you ever known Jessie to say what was not so?"

"No, no, never before."

"Did she ever slip the blinder half

way off when you were playing blind man's buff, or even get a peep hole?"

"No, never; she is a grand one; we always want to blind her."

"Did she ever say she had not the button when you were playing 'button, button,' and made you hunt after you had guessed she had it?"

"No, she always owns it; and sometimes we guess by her looks; she isn't a good hider."

"Did you ever see her copy the answer of a sum without doing it?"

Many little heads were hung down now; they felt conscious that they had; but a few voices said, "*We* never saw her."

"Did you ever know her ask a child to tell her an answer when she had not quite got her lesson?"

"I told her once," said Kitty Cole, "and she was mad at me for it. I know so much."

"Did you ever hear her tell any other girl their lesson?"

"No; I have asked her ever so many times when she knew, and she wouldn't say a single word, not even the first letter in geography."

Jessie began to cry; she did not know what so much talking about her could mean, therefore, Miss Goddard said:

"Well, children, this only shows you of how much value it is to have established a character for truth. During all these weeks, when so much has been said against Jessie, how many of you have felt that it was strange such a fault has been laid to her? None of you, I hope, have been

glad that she could be thought guilty, and perhaps might be. I am sure none of you have for any length of time ; and you are all happy now to have me able to say to you that she did not tell Macy Barton, and is as innocent as the rest of you."

"Who did, then?" asked Susan Ray, starting up abruptly in her seat. "Helen Norton said she knew it; she even told some of the girls she heard her one day when she was hid behind the rock, and they did not know that she was there."

"You need ask no questions about it; I have not been informed who the little girl was who did the thing; it is enough for us to know that Jessie did not. I hope now you will all remember that this whole thing only goes to prove how strong and stanch

a principle truth is ; how in the end, no matter what clouds may be over you in this present, you are always, *always* sure to come out triumphant. God loves the true child, and will watch over and care for her with a real father's affection ; he will love us a great deal better than any earthly father can, and he is always near watching—watching that in the end it shall appear how just and good he is.”

Macy Barton was sobbing now. It is really strange what a natural outlet God has made tears for an overburdened girl's heart. Jessie heard her, and following the motion of Miss Goddard's finger as she caught her eye, went and sat down close beside her, putting her arm around her neck, and wiping away both her own and

Macy's tears with the corner of her green gingham apron.

Helen Norton had sat very uneasily in her seat during this proceeding; she had wanted to stay at home from school, and not come that day, but the promise she had made Susan Ross she understood as applying to everything that was right and proper through the day; and she had often enough been told by her mother that it was a sin and a shame for her to let her work so hard to earn the money to pay for her schooling when she wouldn't even take the trouble to go to the school-house. So to school she had come, and so much of the day had passed without any reference to her confession, when Miss Goddard surprised her by the sudden announcement.

As she saw the faces of the children turned now toward Jessie and now toward herself, and she read in their looks aversion and wonder, all the ugly part of her nature woke up, and she sat silent, pouting and very unhappy. If Miss Goddard had made one direct allusion to her, or had even looked at her, the impression certainly would not have been very favorable for any future attempt on her part to do right; but as it was she met Miss Goddard's eye but once, then she was sure the expression was more kindly than it had ever been before.

A few minutes after, as Miss Goddard was passing round to inspect the desks of the children and see if they were in perfect order, as she came to hers she put her hand upon her

head with the affectionate motion she had seen her so often use, and envied the girls whose lot it was. Miss Goddard had hardly removed it when Helen caught it hastily, and said in a loud, clear tone,

“It aint fair, Miss Goddard, that anybody else in school should be suspected who didn’t do it. I did it myself. I went down to Macy Barton’s the night before the surprise party and told her all about it, and made her promise on her word and honor she would never tell who told her ; so there, now.”

“That is a brave, good child, Helen,” said Miss Goddard, laying her hand again upon her head. “I have hopes that with this beginning it may not be long before we all say of you as we do of Jessie :

It must be true, Helen Norton *says so.*"

"Children," she said, turning to the astonished school, "you hear what Helen says now. I hope in one thing you will all make her your example. Never consider a fault too great to be confessed, and always remember that next to forsaking a bad habit is to be willing to say that you have it, and to offer yourselves to bear whatever penalty may be attached to it. Say, now, what will you do to Helen Norton?"

"Never tell her anything again as long as we live, never; she is a liar, and a real cheat too," said Susan Ray, angrily.

"That is very unkind, Susan; what do the others say?"

"We are glad she has owned up,

and we may hear Jessie's stories again. We don't care anything about Helen Norton."

"Selfish," said Miss Goddard briefly.

"I am glad," said Kitty Cole, jumping up and clapping her hands, "that Helen has told the truth, for now she will be a good girl, and we can love her just as much as we have a mind."

"Right," said Miss Goddard; "Kitty has said all there is any need of saying. Now you can love Helen as much as you please. I shall love her too, and we will all hope that this is the very last untruth that ever will be uttered in Miss Goddard's school."

During prayers the children were uncommonly serious, and Miss Goddard was careful to secure the oppor-

tunity, and impress upon them what a great and good thing truth is."

Such is the lesson which this chapter teaches my young readers also—truth, truth. What in the world has the child to fear who always speaks the truth? Nothing to hide, nothing to be found out in, nothing of which to wonder if they are suspected; no one to doubt them, no one to shun them; and above all, their dear Saviour ready to take them to his arms, and say: "Of such, such children only, is my beautiful kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KNIFE.

It was with a lighter heart than she had known since the surprise party that Macy Barton went home from school that night. Jessie Ross was no longer under suspicion, and Helen Norton had confessed of her own accord. Now in reality, for the first time since the party, she began to love to think it over, and it was surprising how much company it became to her after she had bid good-by to Jessie at the corner, and continued her way alone. Happy, cheerful thoughts of George also came by the certain laws of association, (do any of my little readers

know what these are?) and she felt almost sure that before many days, or weeks at least, George would be as clear of any injustice as Jessie was. She was going through some imaginary conversation between Mr. Swift and George, when her thoughts were interrupted by Fred Ross, who had been waiting for a full half hour under the butternut-tree.

"You are late to-day, Macy," he said, as he joined her. "Did you miss in your lessons, and have to be kept after school?"

"No!" said Macy, laughing, "but I have the best thing in the world to tell you, Fred."

She then repeated the whole story of Jessie's trouble from beginning to end, to which Fred listened with flashing eyes and very tight shut lips.

“If I had known it before I would have gone to Helen Norton and shaken it out of her,” he said at last; but immediately sinking his voice added, “that is, I would if she had not been a girl; it wouldn’t look very pretty, you know, to see me thrashing a girl if she was ever so bad.”

“She told at last, and that was good in her,” said Macy.

“Yes, that wasn’t so bad; Helen aint a sneak if you get her into a corner; but she is only a girl after all.”

“She spoke right out, as if she was as brave as a lion,” said Macy.

“My sakes,” said Fred, shaking his head slowly, “girls aint apt to be much like lions, but I think it was better than sticking to it. I shouldn’t be surprised after all, if the worst

came to the worst, if she'd have almost pluck enough to fight."

"Girls never fight," said Macy, looking with much astonishment at Fred. "Did you think they did?"

"I don't know. Helen Norton never seemed exactly like a girl to me. She can climb a stile as quickly as I can; and down in Bent's woods I saw her swing off a beach-tree that would have made me wink, I tell you. She is what we boys call a tom-boy."

"She can bat a ball too," said Macy, as if anxious to add to the list of her accomplishments, "and never wants us to play a girl's play if she can help it. Don't you think she had twenty-five cents once, and spent it in marbles."

"That's a great one," said Fred,

clapping his hands. "I should like to know what became of them."

"She lost part of them, and then sold the rest for a shilling. The girls got tired of playing them very soon."

"I dare say; marbles were never made for girls, nor girls for marbles. I don't believe now, Macy, you could shoot one in a straight line to save your life."

"No, I never could," said Macy meekly.

"Nor pitch a ball so a fellow could give it a right sound rap with his bat."

"I never tried," said Macy, looking still more depressed.

"But you never wanted to cheat in any play in your life, did you?" asked Fred encouragingly.

"No, never," said Macy in the

same tone ; "that would be wrong, you know."

"But boys always want to cheat, and that is where you have one advantage if you are a girl."

"I don't see why."

"O, 'cause it's more fun."

"I shouldn't think so."

"But they do, you see, and that is just the difference."

Macy's eyes expressed so much wonder that Fred could not help laughing. "O dear," he said, "I don't think it's at all strange that the women folks grow up sort of simple ; they don't seem to take to knowledge naturally."

Macy felt this question of the equality of the sexes was evidently beyond her depth, so she was silent ; and Fred, after waiting in vain for

the discussion he had promised himself, and in which he felt particularly well posted, as they had had it the last week in the debating club in the Lyceum, said:

"You don't know much what all this means, do you, Macy? Well, after all, let us return to the point under debate, or rather, let us leave Helen Norton for George Barton. How is he getting on? I haven't seen or heard a thing from him for nearly a week."

"O poor George!" said Macy, with a slight tremor in her voice, "he don't seem at all as he used to. He never whistles, never sings, unless it is that song about "Courage boy, courage!" and he eats so little that it makes me cry every time I clear the table away."

"It is mean as—as—I don't like to say what before you, Macy, but it's awful mean. I think that nothing can be done to help him out of this scrape. There is Mr. Swift looks at him like a thunder-cloud every time he goes to work, and Mr. Towne twits him every chance he gets; even Paul M'Loggen took it into his burly head to find fault with him yesterday; but that was more than George would stand any way. He just told him to mind his own business and let him alone. I never heard George speak up quite so sharp."

"He is very unhappy, I think," said Macy; "but he tries to laugh and talk cheerfully when we are alone together. I think he means to go through the summer months as he

engaged to, because, he says, a raw hand, who did not know just what was wanted in the way of hoeing and weeding, would only add to Mr. Swift's losses, and he was always a good master before."

"I don't see," said Fred with a great deal of energy, "how he can stand it all; why, it's enough to make a boy go crazy. I should be so mad I should positively die of very vexation; and he bears it right on like—why, like a man as he is," and Fred became very warm in his praise.

"I can't bear it if he can. Last Sunday, when I saw how pale and thin he was getting, I felt as if I must spring right over the tops of the pews and knock Rob Towne down. Father noticed it too, and

asked me if George Barton was not working too hard this summer. I had as much as I could do to keep my tongue between my teeth. I ached all over to tell."

"But you didn't," said Macy, looking frightened.

"No, of course; how absurd for you to ask such a question. But I did say I wished father would take occasion to ride around by Mr. Swift's and ask him something about George. I was afraid the next thing we knew he would be down in a fever; but father said he looked more like consumption. Then he asked me a great many questions, such as whether he ever coughed, and if his appetite were good."

"He does cough every night," said Macy, turning very pale.

“Well, well, now don’t go to being scared to death at a shadow,” said Fred, instantly repenting his unwise communication. “He will be as strong as a horse again as soon as we settle this matter about Rob Towne.”

“I am so afraid,” said Macy.

“Nonsense ! girls are always so afraid ; what sense is there in it ? Father took the hint, and I’ll bet you a fourpence he has gone around this very morning to talk with Mr. Swift about it. That will do famously ; there is nobody like father for putting everything this side up with care, and you two children, you know, he feels as if you sort of belonged to him since your grandfather died. But come, here we are at the mill-dam. Now cheer up, and I’ll go round to

Mr. Swift's barn-yard, and look again, for the thousandth time, I believe, to see if I can't just fish up something that will make Rob own up whether or no."

Fred went off immediately, for in truth he had no fancy for being comforter to a crying child, and he saw by the moisture which kept gathering in Macy's eyes that it was only his presence which restrained her from a hearty frightened cry. He wished, over and over again, that he had not said a word about George's being pale, but he was just one of the boys who speak first and are sorry afterward.

As he said, he had been around the barn-yard gate and premises a great many times, hoping that he should be able to come upon something which would fasten the guilt on Rob, but so

far entirely in vain. He knew every brown stone, every uneven clump of ground; not a broken stick but he had measured its dimensions, and calculated whether it could by any means unfold the mystery. Never had Fred been so persevering, so determined; he would not take no for an answer before.

It seemed to him to-night, as he approached the yard, as if an unusual stillness had fallen upon everything; he looked around to see if there were any dark clouds presaging a thunder shower, but the sky was still and blue, and the sun was going toward its resting-place in the west as quietly as if it had never shone upon any trouble or sorrow.

Fred was very easily impressed by any object in nature. "There," said

he now, stopping and striking his heel down hard upon a stone, "I wish I dare say that if I don't find out something that will help George before that sun goes down I'll stay till I do; but after all it's no use. Mother would be anxious about me, and Jessie would cry her eyes out, for all I know, if I was missing, so I'll take a real thorough look. If I only could find Rob's knife, with a bit of the rope that was round the gate, and Rob's initials engraved on the handle, just as sometimes, when a murder has been committed, they find the dagger with the murderer's name all stained over with the man's blood, how splendid it would be. I verily believe I should know Rob's knife, if he had lost it, if I only saw the very tiniest end of the handle."

Fred unconsciously had quite settled it in his own mind that Rob had lost his knife, and went to work most energetically to look it up. While he was busy turning over every stone—even the chips around the place where the gate opened—he was surprised by hearing Mr. Swift say close beside him,

“Here, here, boy! What are you about? I’ve caught you at last, have I? And you are the rogue who let my cattle out into the cornfield.” At the same moment Fred felt his collar so tightly seized in the back that a momentary sense of suffocation ensued. Then came several rough shakes, in the midst of which Fred raised himself up from the stooping position, which had nearly hidden his face, and Mr. Swift saw to

his surprise it was a son of Dr. Ross.

“You—you here!” he said, relaxing his hold. “What in the world are *you* doing here?”

“Hunting after Rob Towne’s knife,” said Fred, telling the truth literally, without thinking how it might sound.

“Why don’t Rob find his own knife? and how came he to lose it here, I should like to know?”

“O that is the very point,” said Fred, recovering himself completely; “that is just the thing I want to find. You see I believe as firmly as I do that two and two make four that Rob Towne let the cattle in, and as the rope was cut, I have a notion that he cut it with his knife, and being kind of scared, as all bad boys are when they have done a wicked thing, I’ve

got it into my head somehow that he dropped the knife and run. I thought, Mr. Swift, if I could find it it would almost cry out to you, as they say the murderers' knives do, of its own accord."

"What makes you think Rob Towne opened the gate?" asked Mr. Swift.

"Because—I don't think I *know*"—answered Fred, confidently—"when I had him in the bushes with old Betsy in my hands I almost made him confess; he would have told me straight enough if I had promised I would not tell you; but I wouldn't be caught that way in a hurry, so he got off; ran as if there was a mad dog after him when he saw his father coming."

"But Rob had no business at my

gate; and if George Barton thought he did it why didn't he say so, and clear himself?"

"He is too honorable, I tell you;" and Fred repeated these three last words in a very prolonged manner. "You wouldn't catch him telling of a work-fellow even to clear himself; but I should think, Mr. Swift, you couldn't look into his face without seeing that he didn't do it; it's written all over it, in letters as big as—as—"

"Well, never mind as what," said Mr. Swift smiling; "I don't read it there, not even if I put on my spectacles; and now as you are so very sure it is Rob, perhaps you can tell me one of your sufficient reasons."

"Because he is mean," said Fred promptly.

"Mean? how?"

“O he revenges himself any way to get out of; or away from, any scrape. He never thinks anything of consequences any more than he did when he took the dish for bailing out the boat; and then, when the boys pushed out into the pond, pulled the cotton by a string he had tied to it out from the bottom of the boat. Why the boat swamped before they had gone quarter way across, and Rob tells of it as a good joke, though he got the awfulest whipping for it I ever heard of; he was so stiff for a month it was as much as he could do to hobble along.”

“He richly deserved it,” said Mr. Swift; “I hope his father gave it to him.”

“I rather think not, sir,” said

Fred, growing more respectful as he saw he was gaining Mr. Swift's ear; "the boys who were thrown into the water gave it to him themselves when they came on shore. His father is very indulgent, sir, and some folks think he don't listen much to Solomon, and sparing the rod spoils the child."

"Well, so much for that," said Mr. Swift thoughtfully; "but after all, because a boy has done a mean thing once don't prove that he will go on doing them as long as he lives."

"No, to be sure it don't; but Rob tells falsehoods, everybody knows, and a boy who will do that will do almost everything else that is bad."

"Granted, my boy," and Mr. Swift's voice began to have a cordial tone in

it ; “ but how do you know George Barton does not do the same thing ? ”

“ Did you ever know him to ? ” asked Fred, looking into Mr. Swift’s face archly.

“ No, I think not, but he has had no great motive for it since he has been with me ; there is nothing to be made by falsehoods about digging and sowing.”

“ I have heard of boys who turned a pretty penny by slipping seeds into their pockets instead of into the ground,” said Fred ; “ and I even think of other ways of acting a lie ; if not of speaking one. Did you ever know George act one ? ”

“ Well, I can’t say I have. George has been an industrious, upright boy for the most ; but there is nobody who won’t do a careless thing some-

times, and George is not perfect. He may have thought he locked the gate and yet not done it."

"Then you ought to forgive him, Mr. Swift; if he didn't mean to he is no more to blame than I am."

"I don't know as I find any fault with him for it; what is done is done, and all the fretting from now to Christmas will not restore my corn."

"But George is very unhappy, sir."

"Does he say so?"

"Not he; he would cut his tongue out first; but for all that I know he is; he don't grow so pale and thin for nothing. My father is afraid he may die of consumption."

"So he has been around to say," said Mr. Swift slowly; "but I don't see any change in the boy. I have just been down to the potato patch

to see, and if anything he is working harder now than he ever has done before."

"That's it exactly, Mr. Swift; George would work until he dropped down dead if he happened to fancy he was under your displeasure. He would wish to feel himself, and to have you feel (I have heard him say so fifty times since the gate was left open) that he was not indebted to you for a single cent of the money which you pay him, but that he earned it, and over-earned it, every day of his life."

"That is not like a boy; I don't believe it," said Mr. Swift sternly.

Fred colored: "I don't know," he said, "whom you don't believe, George or myself, but you can just look on and judge for yourself better than I can tell you. If you find him

doing less than a day's work from now until his time is out you may set it down for boy's talk, that's all."

"I don't know that I hired him for any particular time," said Mr. Swift.

"But I do, and so does George. He says he is engaged to you until November; then he is his own master."

"And what does he intend to do then?"

"He don't know—find somebody to work for who won't distrust him, though he says, Mr. Swift, you have been as kind as a father to him until this happened; if it hadn't been for that, I can tell you he wouldn't have worked another stroke for you after the time you raised your whip at him."

"Perhaps in all this wide world

another boy as smart as George Barton might have been hired," said Mr. Swift, smiling in spite of his vexation.

"Try it and see, Mr. Swift; man's work on boy's wages don't grow on every bush."

"No; a good boy is as scarce as roses in winter," and there was something very kindly in Mr. Swift's voice as he said this. "Sometimes I think I will let the whole race go by and hire only men. George Barton was a treasure, but, as you say, he is doing a man's work for boy's wages. I must see to it, I must see to it; it will never do to have him go on whining in this way."

"George never whines," said Fred very indignantly.

"No? Well then he employs his

young friends to do it for him, which is a great deal worse."

"He didn't employ me; I hope you don't think so, sir?"

"Didn't he? then why did you come?"

"Because, sir—because," and Fred's voice fairly trembled with the intensity of his emotion, "I can't bear it any longer; I shall die if George don't get righted somehow."

"You? what have you to do with it?"

"Everything; he is the best fellow in Sherburne, and he is an orphan too. Mr. Swift, I know you forgot that. It would be hard if your little Eddie should ever come to just such a lot; I am sure I should be sorry, for one."

"Well, well, Fred, I don't see as

we come any nearer to agreeing than when we first began to talk ; but I will tell you what we will do, as you can't find the knife."

"I should know it if I did," said Fred, interrupting him, "it is a horn handle, with a big plate on it, and R. T. scratched on seven times ; then the small blade has the point broken off, and is turned up on the large one, a curious kind of a turn ; he did it trying to pry open the lock of the teacher's desk. He said he wanted to see our marks, so at it he went, crooked his knife, and got nothing beside but a flogging for his pains."

"He got just the kind of marks he deserved," said Mr. Swift, smiling.

Fred could not help smiling too. There was something very odd about Mr. Swift ; one moment he thought

he was an unkind, cross man, and the next thing he knew there was such a genial, pleasant look about his eyes and mouth that he almost felt disposed to love him.

“I tell you what I will do, Fred,” he continued, “I will call up George to-night, after he has done his work, pay him, and tell him he may go if he chooses. Then, you see, all this extra pity on your part will be thrown away.”

“But don’t you feel sorry for him, sir?” asked Fred, looking earnestly up into Mr. Swift’s face.

There were the pleasant eyes, and he said, “I don’t know ; you see I have no proof that he did not leave my gate open.”

“Yes, sir, I think you have. He says he did not.”

"So does Rob Towne."

"But Rob is a liar, and George never told you a falsehood since he lived with you. Did he, sir?"

"Never; I always trust him."

"So do we boys. I have a little sister at home, sir, her name is Jessie. We children always say if Jessie *says* so it's all right; and so we boys, you know, have the same phrase about George; 'O if he says so, it's all safe, go ahead.'"

"Well, that is worth a small fortune to a boy. If I were George I would rather have it for mine than any number of dollars."

"It don't stand him in good stead now," said Fred sorrowfully.

"Well, well, boy, that isn't your fault. Hold on and make as firm a friend when you grow up, and I will

hope my Eddie may be so fortunate as to have you for one of his."

"Sir?" asked Fred, not understanding him, "I don't know exactly what you mean. You are not laughing at me, are you?"

"No, no, boy. If you find the knife, come up to the house and let me know."

"But you won't turn poor George away for anything I have said, will you?" persisted Fred.

"Why, boy, you are unreasonable; you complain to me that he is working himself to death, and can't help it; then when I tell you he can go, and I will give him free leave to find an easier place, then you grumble too."

"But, Mr. Swift, if you would only believe him, and say good morning,

and a kind word, as you used, George would rather live here and work like a dog than go anywhere else."

Mr. Swift only smiled, but Fred thought it was the pleasantest smile he ever saw, and he stood still and watched him as he went once more in the direction of the field where George was busy with his hoe.

Impelled by an irresistible curiosity, he jumped upon a stile, from whence he could watch every step of his way. He thought if he was a rich man, like Mr. Swift, and had a poor boy like George under him, he should know very quickly what to do. He would forgive him everything, and make him as happy as he could. Indeed, he went off, something in Jessie's style, to making all kinds of plans as to what he would

do and say under precisely such circumstances, and in the mean time he kept his eyes fixed steadily upon Mr. Swift, who, switching down every thistle which came in his way with the top of his cane, walked more and more slowly as he approached George.

Then he made a pause, and turned abruptly away, as if he had changed his mind, and Fred, with mingled feelings of pain and pleasure, saw him going rapidly toward his own house.

“George is safe from being turned away to-day at least,” he thought; “and now I will just give one more look for the knife and run home. I shall wish to go around there to-night and see what has come of it all. Mr. Swift is curious any way. I never saw such a man before. I’ll talk to

father about him, and see what he thinks."

Again everything was turned over and over. We have all heard of finding needles in hay-mows. That would have proved easy work in comparison with finding the crooked pointed knife.

CHAPTER IX.

SAYS SO.

It would almost seem as if Macy Barton was to have another surprise party, there was such a congregation of little folks about the mill-dam that evening.

Helen Norton came because she wanted to see Macy look happy, and to hear from her that she had been a good girl, and done right; for Helen dearly loved praise, perhaps all the better for so rarely deserving it.

Jessie came, of course. O she had so much to say, and so much to hear! She begged of her mother a longer time for the visit, which, having been

informed of all the circumstances, Mrs. Ross willingly granted.

Could she ever get there? how long the way was! Deacon Crosby's pasture never stretched out so far before, and there must come the two barns, the patch of woods, and the blueberry pasture, even before they could come in sight of the mill-dam. Dear! dear! Jessie began almost to cry, she was so impatient. If she was only a bird, and could fly just for this once, she would not ask for wings all her lifetime again, never, never. "O only a donkey!" said Jessie, changing her walk into an imitative trot, how much better that would be than nothing.

Susan Ray was there before her; she saw her pink sun-bonnet as soon as she was on the last hill. How sorry

she was ; but Susan was a good girl, and if any one must come she would rather have her than anybody else.

Jessie was quite a queen. As she came up Macy thought she could never stop kissing her, she was so glad for her ; and Susy had a queer feeling that if she had not been different from the rest of the girls she would have been angry a great many times, and gone off, when she sat quietly, only looking very sad and sorry.

The three little girls were very busy talking together, when Kitty Cole came trotting up to them, Jessie could not help thinking, something in the donkey fashion she had been using herself. There was always a place for Kitty wherever Jessie was, and as Macy and herself could not

be alone together, no one could be more welcome; but what was the astonishment of all to see Helen Norton, then Nancy Smith, Mary Summers, Etty Sheldon, Catharine Davenport, and Esie Farrar, coming too.

“Another surprise party,” said Jessie, jumping up and clapping her hands. “Another surprise party, Macy; jump, and receive them in due style.”

But Macy was of little consequence to-night; every thought and attention was devoted to Jessie; and at last a whispered consultation took Kitty and three others away into the adjoining woods.

Helen Norton, after a few awkward minutes, was received as if she had had no share in the trouble and unhappiness through which Jessie had

gone, and every word and look of the girl seemed to say : " Try me, and see if I am not a very different child from what I ever was before ; at any rate, if you will all help me, I mean truly and sincerely to try ;" and the other children's words and looks said in reply : " And we will help you, Helen Norton ; try us, and see."

After the girls had been gone a few minutes they returned with a very pretty wreath, made up of dwarf green pine and bright fox-berries. Kitty Cole, going up to Jessie, and standing on the very tips of her small feet in order to reach Jessie's head, said :

" You are the Queen of Truth, Jessie Ross ; we crown you to-night ; ascend your throne, and reign forever." And then the children, in imitation

of what they had read the English children do, all cried together, "God save our queen," and waved their sun-bonnets in a very loyal manner.

Hardly had the old woods ceased from echoing their sweet voices when it took up another song; it was George and Fred singing the old song:

"Courage, boy, courage, there's strength in thy
soul ;

Believing and doing bring help from on high."

"There they are," said the children, starting up and running to meet them. "I am so glad," added Kitty, "to have them see how pretty our queen looks with her green crown and her long curls, and we will tell them, Miss Goddard says

God sent us Jessie Ross to teach us to remember how great and beautiful a thing it is always—*always* to speak the truth.”

“Halloo!” sang out Fred as he saw the party, “how happens this? Another surprise party, is there? But I say, Halloo again, our Jes seems to be the queen; crown, subjects, and all.”

“Beause she always tells the truth,” said half a dozen voices at once.

“O that is the game, is it? Well, that is one that, for this night at least, two can play at, for here comes a boy,” pulling George hastily forward, “who has got his crown too for speaking the truth, though it is in his pocket, where it should be, as he

is a boy, and not on his head, like Jes, who is only a girl."

"For shame, Fred," said George, half blushing.

"You just shut up your mouth and let me be spokesman," said Fred, with an air of mock importance; "every great man employs his substitute, or secretary, or some such thing, you know, so here it goes.

"Be it known unto you all, ladies and gentlemen, or my beloved hearers, whichever you prefer, that this morning Mr. Swift left me doubting whether he was an angel or a—a—a—well, no matter what, but something that isn't quite so good, and I have moped all day, because, you see, it wasn't any use; there was no knife there no more than mine was, and if

I had hunted until the day after never I shouldn't have found one, so I had about given it up and felt, why I felt real mean, I tell you. Now the long and the short of it is, that Mr. Swift was an angel after all, and instead of turning George off, as I thought he meant to, what do you think he has done?"

"What? what?" asked a chorus of voices.

"Why he has just called him up and paid him a man's wages for what he has been doing all this time, while he was working like a horse, you know; and best of all, told him that though he could find no kind of proof to show that he did not leave the gate open, he believed it as firmly as if he had seen him shut and lock

it with his own eyes, and should for the future place the most implicit confidence in him."

"Three cheers for Mr. Swift!" he said after pausing long enough to catch his breath. "Three cheers for Mr. Swift, the kindest man in all Sherburne!"

The girls tried, but in a most unsatisfactory manner to Fred, to give the three cheers.

"Pshaw! nonsense!" he said with much contempt as they stopped. "If you haven't any more voices than that try it your own way; I forgot you were girls."

The girls looked abashed, but Helen Norton, whom you will remember Fred once called a "tom-boy," took off her sun-bonnet, and

tossing it up, gave this rather inappropriate shout :

“Three cheers for the child who dares always to tell the truth !”

“Three cheers,” interrupted Fred, “for Jessie *said so.*”

THE END.







